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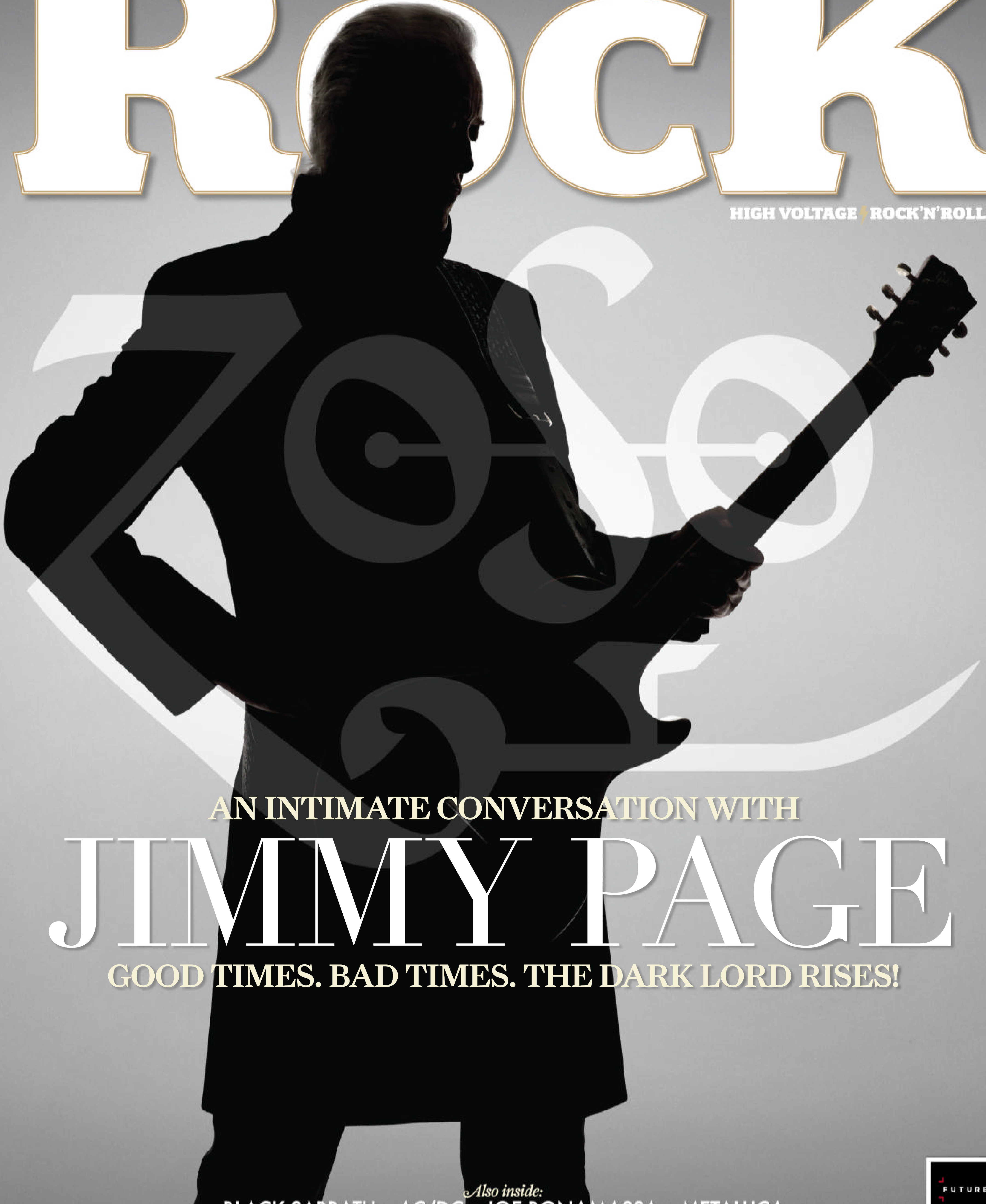

AN INTIMATE CONVERSATION WITH

JIMMY PAGE

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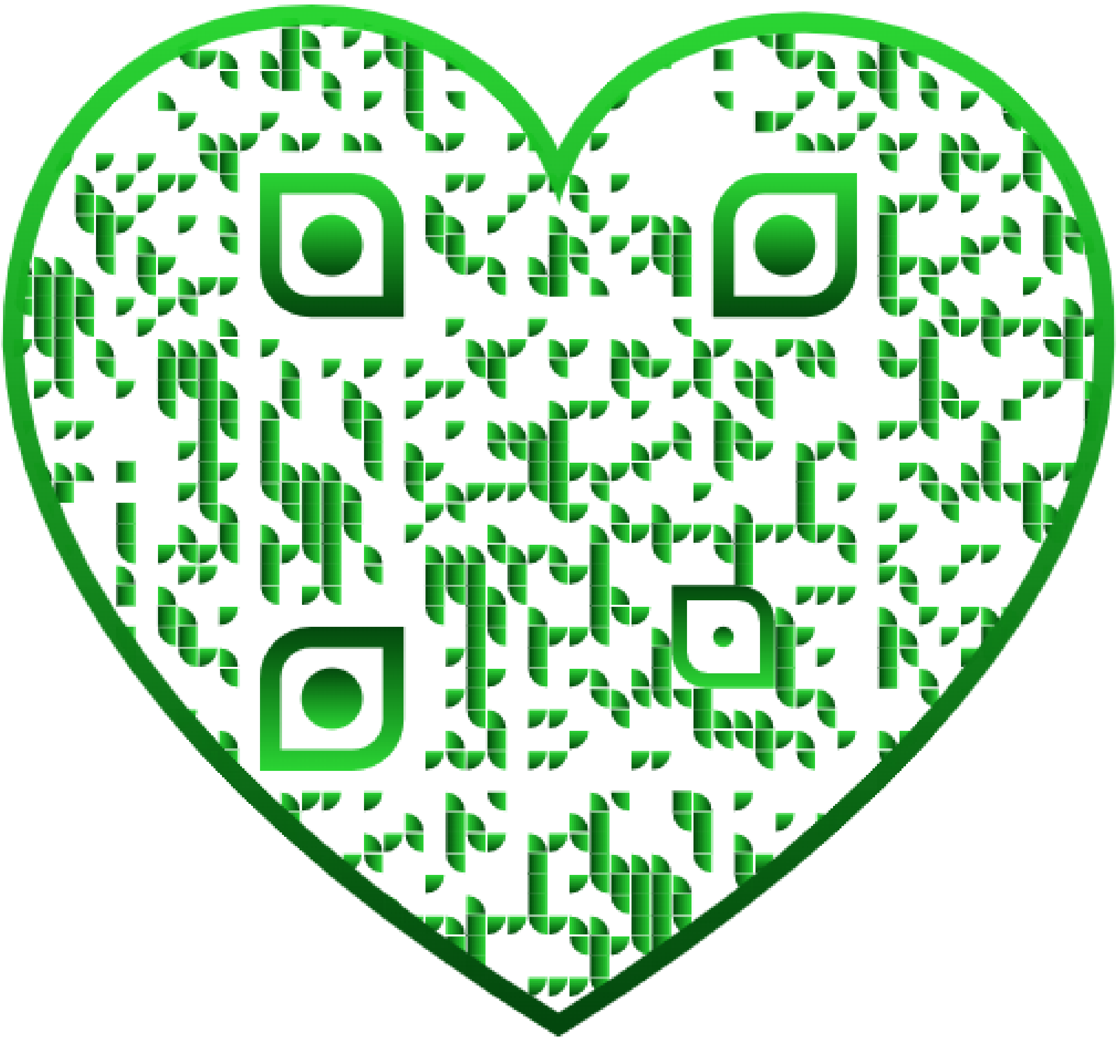
BROTHERS OSBORNE ★ MARILYN MANSON ★ SKUNK ANANSIE *and more!*

FUTURE
ISSUE 281



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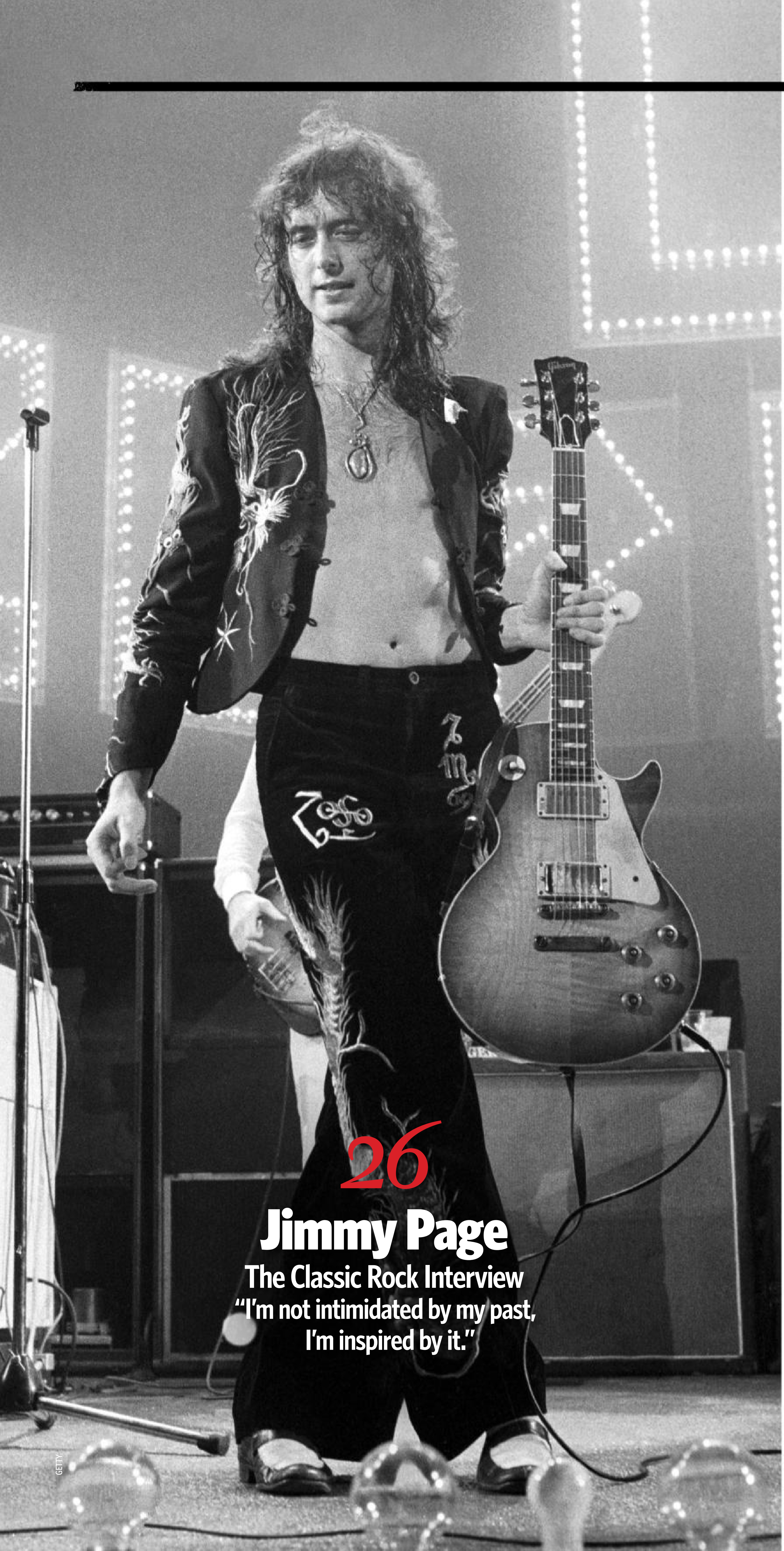

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Jimmy Page

The Classic Rock Interview

"I'm not intimidated by my past, I'm inspired by it."

GETTY

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MIDNIGHT OIL THE MAKARRATA PROJECT

ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART. WE, GATHERED AT THE 2017 NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, COMING FROM ALL POINTS OF THE SOUTHERN SKY, MAKE THIS STATEMENT FROM THE HEART: OUR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER TRIBES WERE THE FIRST SOVEREIGN NATIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN CONTINENT AND ITS ADJACENT ISLANDS, AND POSSESSED IT UNDER OUR OWN LAWS AND CUSTOMS. THIS OUR ANCESTORS DID, ACCORDING TO THE RECKONING OF OUR CULTURE, FROM THE CREATION, ACCORDING TO THE COMMON LAW FROM 'TIME IMMEMORIAL', AND ACCORDING TO SCIENCE MORE THAN 60,000 YEARS AGO. THIS SOVEREIGNTY IS A SPIRITUAL NOTION: THE ANCESTRAL TIE BETWEEN THE LAND, OR 'MOTHER NATURE', AND THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES WHO WERE BORN THEREFROM, REMAIN ATTACHED THERETO, AND MUST ONE DAY RETURN THITHER TO BE UNITED WITH OUR ANCESTORS. THIS LINK IS THE BASIS OF THE OWNERSHIP OF THE SOIL, OR BETTER, OF SOVEREIGNTY. IT HAS NEVER BEEN CEDED OR EXTINGUISHED, AND CO-EXISTS WITH THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE CROWN. HOW COULD IT BE OTHERWISE? THAT PEOPLES POSSESSED A LAND FOR SIXTY MILLENNIA AND THIS SACRED LINK DISAPPEARS FROM WORLD HISTORY IN MERELY THE LAST TWO HUNDRED YEARS? WITH SUBSTANTIVE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND STRUCTURAL REFORM, WE BELIEVE THIS ANCIENT SOVEREIGNTY CAN SHINE THROUGH AS A FULLER EXPRESSION OF AUSTRALIA'S NATIONHOOD. PROPORTIONALLY, WE ARE THE MOST INCARCERATED PEOPLE ON THE PLANET. WE ARE NOT AN INNATELY CRIMINAL PEOPLE. OUR CHILDREN ARE ALIENED FROM THEIR FAMILIES AT UNPRECEDENTED RATES. THIS CANNOT BE BECAUSE WE HAVE NO LOVE FOR THEM. AND OUR YOUTH LANGUISH IN DETENTION IN OBSCENE NUMBERS. THEY SHOULD BE OUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. THESE DIMENSIONS OF OUR CRISIS TELL PLAINLY THE STRUCTURAL NATURE OF OUR PROBLEM. THIS IS THE TORMENT OF OUR POWERLESSNESS. WE SEEK CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS TO EMPOWER OUR PEOPLE AND TAKE A RIGHTFUL PLACE IN OUR OWN COUNTRY. WHEN WE HAVE POWER OVER OUR DESTINY OUR CHILDREN WILL FLOURISH. THEY WILL WALK IN TWO WORLDS AND THEIR CULTURE WILL BE A GIFT TO THEIR COUNTRY. WE CALL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FIRST NATIONS VOICE ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION. MAKARRATA IS THE CULMINATION OF OUR AGENDA: THE COMING TOGETHER AFTER A STRUGGLE. IT CAPTURES OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR A FAIR AND TRUTHFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA AND A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN BASED ON JUSTICE AND SELF-DETERMINATION. WE SEEK A MAKARRATA COMMISSION TO SUPERVISE A PROCESS OF AGREEMENT-MAKING BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND FIRST NATIONS AND TRUTH-TELLING ABOUT OUR HISTORY. IN 1967 WE WERE COUNTED, IN 2017 WE SEEK TO BE HEARD. WE LEAVE BASE CAMP AND START OUR TREK ACROSS THIS VAST COUNTRY. WE INVITE YOU TO WALK WITH US IN A MOVEMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

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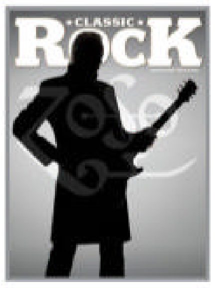
How many guitarists, or other musicians, can claim to have the legacy that James Patrick Page has? After picking up the guitar at an early age, the six-string wizard has been shaping rock'n'roll for decades, whether on early sessions as a hired hand, or with his groundbreaking work with The Yardbirds and then as the mastermind of a little band you might have heard of called Led Zeppelin. Needless to say, it's been quite the life thus far. This month we managed to collar Jimmy for The Classic Rock Interview (p26), in which the music legend takes us through the years from his 'Excalibur' guitar moment, through his incredible body of work, right up to what he's got planned for the future.

Elsewhere we look back at Black Sabbath's *Paranoid* – an album celebrating its half-century, hang out at Abbey Road Studios with Joe Bonamassa, learn the Gospel According To Skin, and so much more. Enjoy!

Siân

Siân Llewellyn,
Editor



THE COVER
JIMMY PAGE
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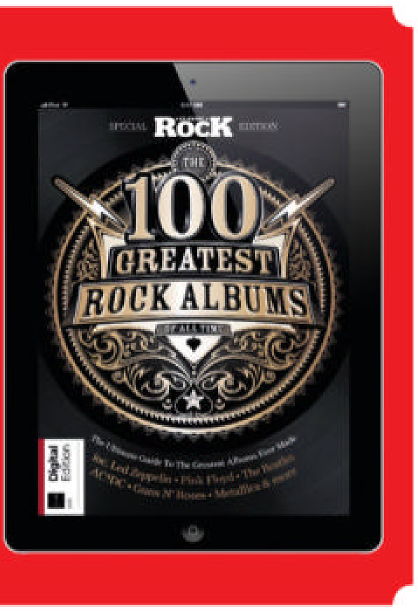

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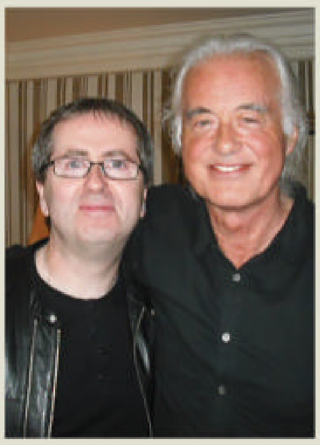
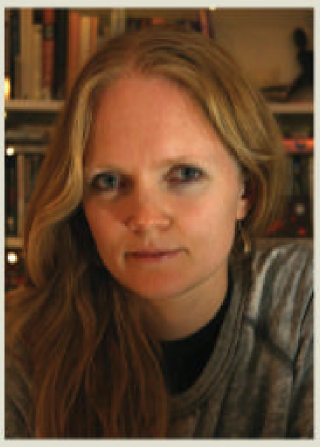


IAN FORTNAM

When not asking Jimmy Page impertinent questions about his wild untamed youth in the church choir (p26), *Classic Rock*'s Reviews Editor punctuates his tireless search for rock gold by recording sonically cinematic space-prog with Sontaag. The collective's latest offering, *Beyond Forever* c/w *Back To My Soul*, is available now via iTunes and the usual streaming platforms.

HENRY YATES

Henry is a freelance journalist who has written about music for the *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, *NME*, *Guitarist*, *Total Guitar* and *Metal Hammer*. This issue he revisits Black Sabbath's mighty *Paranoid* with Geezer Butler (p44) and interviews the none-more-macabre Marilyn Manson (p68). You can see more from Henry at yatescreativecopywriting.com and @henryyates3 on Twitter.



POLLY GLASS

We kept our features editor very busy this month, sending her off (well, via Zoom and phone calls) to Nashville, Philadelphia and Las Vegas to interview the Brothers Osborne (p52), Low Cut Connie (p38) and Corey Taylor (p22). She also chatted to Jakko Jakszyk and Rews, and assembled this month's new music Hot List. She is now fast asleep.

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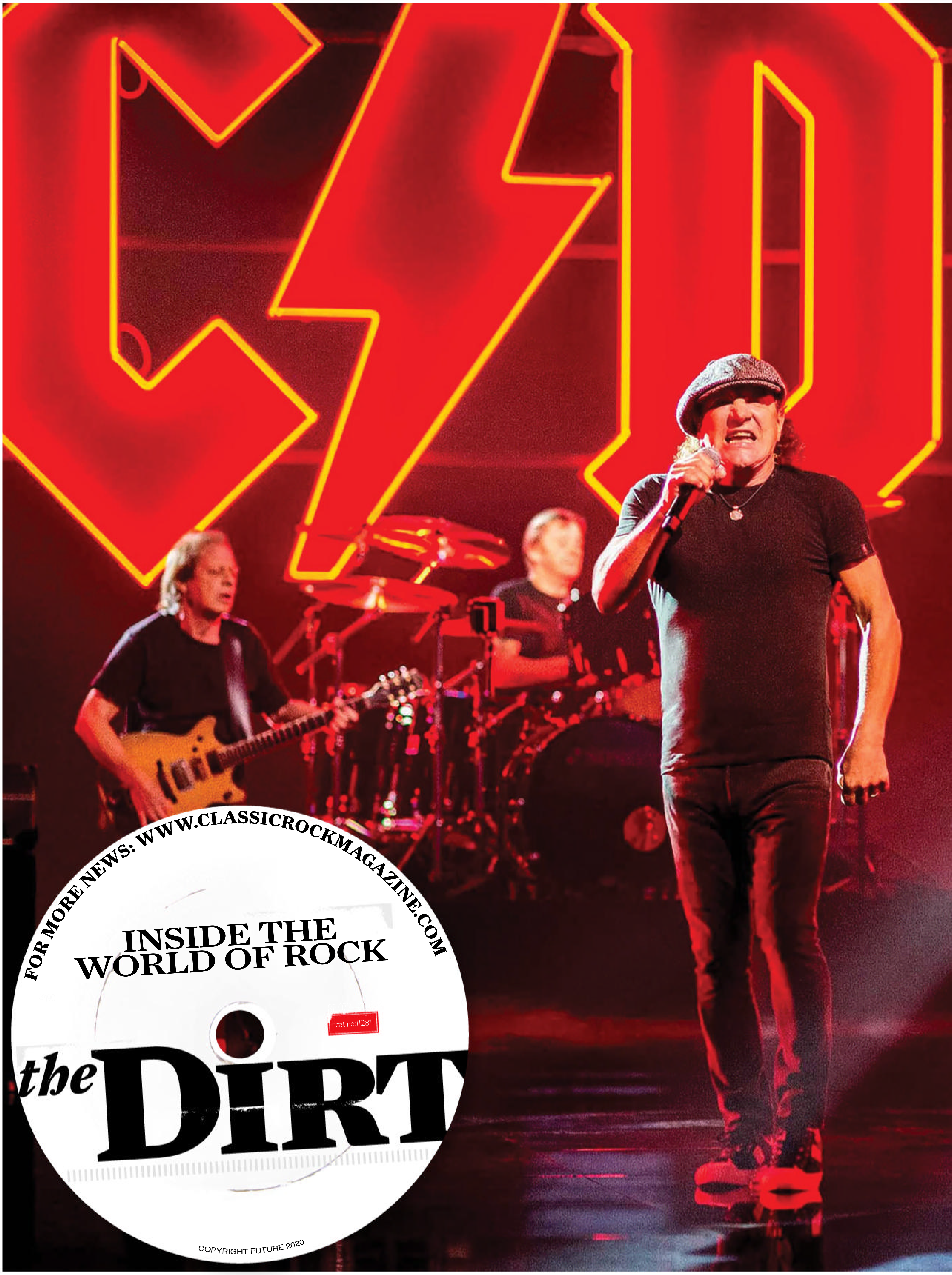

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INSIDE THE WORLD OF ROCK

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AC/DC PLUG IN!

Brand new album released on November 13.

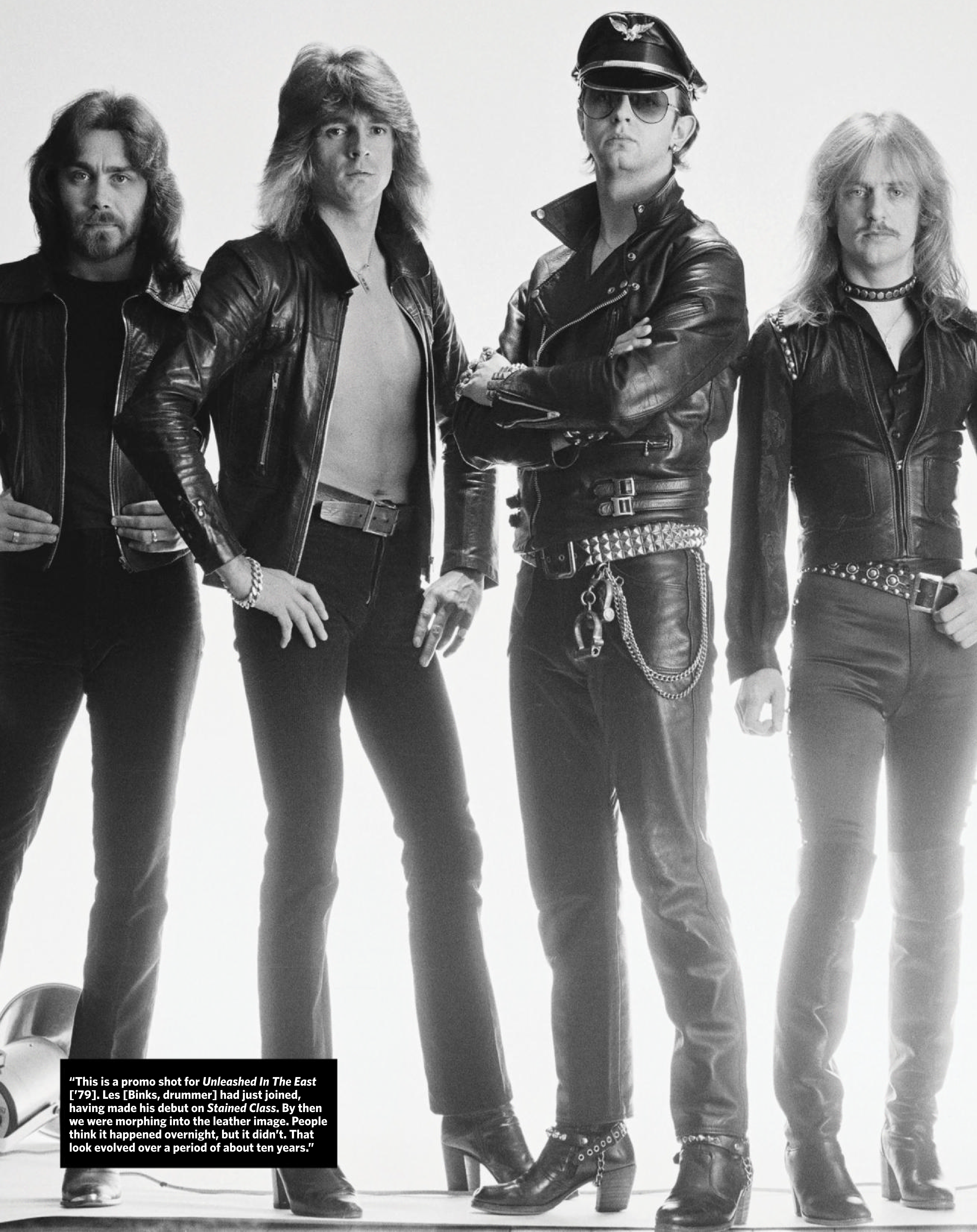
The speculation is over: AC/DC are about to release their first new album in six years. And – just as we suspected and hoped – it has Brian Johnson on vocals, Cliff Williams on bass and Phil Rudd on drums. *Classic Rock* can reveal that *PWR / UP*, the group's long-awaited seventeenth studio album, is released on November 13. It's preceded by the single *Shot In The Dark*, which was rush-released on October 7.

Stills from a video for *Shot In The Dark* were mistakenly posted on the band's website. They were quickly removed, but by then the cat was out of the bag.

Johnson, Williams and Rudd have all returned to the line-up, joining guitarists Angus and Stevie Young. Johnson's place was famously taken by Axl Rose on the latter half of AC/DC's last world tour, while Williams announced that he had retired, and Rudd was replaced by Chris Slade. The album was produced by Brendan O'Brien.

Although the band are yet to comment formally, the album apparently includes previously tracked guitar parts from Malcolm Young, who passed away in 2017.

We won't have to wait long for more news, though. Stay tuned for *CR's* exclusive interview with AC/DC next month. **DL**



"This is a promo shot for *Unleashed In The East* ['79]. Les [Binks, drummer] had just joined, having made his debut on *Stained Class*. By then we were morphing into the leather image. People think it happened overnight, but it didn't. That look evolved over a period of about ten years."

MAIN: FIN COSTELLO; INSETS: OLIVER HALFIN

50 Heavy Metal Years

Judas Priest kick off anniversary celebrations with photobook.

Judas Priest celebrate their 50th anniversary with a new photobook. *50 Heavy Metal Years* collates photographs by Ross Halfin, Neil Zlozower, Mark Weiss, Fin Costello, Oliver Halfin and others and is available in four different formats, including a limited edition to raise funds for The Glenn Tipton Parkinson's Foundation. The basic version retails at £79. There's also an *Epic Leather And Metal* edition, limited to 100 numbered copies signed by the current line-up of vocalist Rob Halford, guitarist Glenn Tipton, bassist Ian Hill, guitarist Richie Faulkner and drummer Scott Travis, costing £299. The book is published in early December.

Ian Hill, the sole original member continuously in the band from their beginning in 1970, talks us through some of his favourite images.

You've been with Judas Priest as man and boy. Replacing Bruno Stapenhill you were, what… 18 years old?

Seventeen, I think. So many others dropped by the wayside. I don't think about [the longevity] at all unless somebody mentions it. But I suppose doing the same job for fifty years is an achievement.

This half-century anniversary must resonate with you?

Yeah, of course it does. Most bands don't last that long. We are among the golden few, I suppose.

How would you describe the journey?

Ultimately, it's been enormously enjoyable to do a job that I love. Some parts were less fun than others, but from sleeping in the van in the freezing cold at the beginning, until the present, well… each day I count my blessings. It's been a pleasure to do it with people I consider friends, and not just colleagues.

"We were Special Guests to Slipknot at the Download Festival in 2015. It poured down. It was typical Donington weather. But we have a strong connection to the place. It was our fourth or fifth time there."

All the same, there must have been very big highs and frustrating lows. For example ninety-one to ninety-six, the years between Rob Halford leaving the band and singer Tim 'Ripper' Owens joining?

Rob's leaving could have been avoided if it had been handled differently. There were factions [that made things worse]. We knew that Rob wanted to make a solo album, and nobody minded, but one thing led to another and we know what happened. But everything's a learning curve. I also enjoyed those several years spent with Ripper in the band.

Covid-19 has delayed the fiftieth anniversary celebrations. How has lockdown affected you?

Well, I got out the train set again [laughs], and I've exhausted all of the jobs that needed to be done around the house. Everything has been shifted till next year, but even then things don't look too promising, do they?

Back in January it was announced that Rob, Glenn and Richie had begun writing

▷

"We headlined at Bloodstock Open Air in 2018, during the tour for *Firepower*. I live within earshot of Bloodstock, and had never been until the previous year. When we were announced to play, people assumed I'd gone to check it, out but that wasn't true. I went to see [eventual JP guitarist] Andy Sneap with his other band, Hell."

This month The Dirt was compiled by Lee Dorrian, Polly Glass, Rob Hughes, Dave Ling, Scott Rowley

"This was back in 2006 at the Tommy Vance tribute show at the Royal Albert Hall. We were fooling around playing each other's instruments at the start of *Breaking The Law*. Fun while we did it, and the audience loved it."

"On stage at the Maracanã Stadium in Rio de Janeiro in 1991. It was our first time at the Rock In Rio Festival and we were Special Guests to Guns N' Roses. That was a complete hoot from start to finish."

"Here we are at the Ozzfest in San Bernadino, California, 2004, playing before 45,000 people. It was sold out every night. Rob had just returned to the band, and Ozzfest was a great reintroduction. We were in the process of recording *Angel Of Retribution*, and when that offer came in we couldn't turn it down."

"KK Downing and I backstage in Chicago supporting Kiss on an early American tour in 1979. We'd first gone out there in '77 and were climbing the ladder. Playing with a band as huge as Kiss did us a massive amount of good."

a follow-up to Priest's 2018 album *Firepower*. How far down the line are you with that?
A lot of the material is already done, but with just six people allowed to be together at one time I don't know when we can record it. We will probably get the anniversary celebrations out of the way, and then when there are no distractions make a start on it. Some great songs were left over from *Firepower* and we might use a few of those. They weren't omitted as inferior, they just didn't fit *Firepower*.

We hear you'll be using the same production team as last time, Tom Allom and Andy Sneap.
All being well, that's the plan. Tom and Andy did a tremendous job with *Firepower*. We're in good shape with the next album.

Last year Priest were once again nominated for the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Rob seemed gung-ho to be included, but when the band didn't make the final cut a disgruntled Richie Faulkner fumed: "The rock hall holds no credibility for me and never has."
I agree with Richie. These accolades are okay for a bit of back-slapping, but they don't change a band's stature. And [because of the panel's anonymity] nobody knows who voted for you anyway. Should it happen it would be nice, but nobody's losing any sleep.

Did you play a part in the compiling of this new photobook?
Other than helping to pick out a few of the pictures, no I didn't. That was done by the publishers. But going through the photos made me feel very nostalgic. There were so many things I'd forgotten.

Allan Atkins, the band's original singer, posted disappointment at the removal of an introduction that he had been asked to write, suggesting the book should be re-titled '47 Years Of Heavy Metal'.
To be honest, I wasn't aware of that. It will have been a management or publisher's decision. But basically it's a picture book anyway.

Have you read Rob's autobiography?
No, not yet. But I was there for most of it [laughs].

He doesn't seem to have held anything back.
No. But that's Rob for you. I will definitely get around to his book in due course.

As the man there for every step of the way, a book from you about Judas Priest would be fascinating.
I've thought about that, and maybe mine would concentrate on the early years – up until the release of the first album. The band's story is now pretty familiar, but a lot of stuff was never told. Some of it is hilarious. **DL**

"Richie Faulkner [left] and Glenn Tipton sharing a laugh at the High Voltage Festival at Victoria Park in London back in 2011. The High Voltage Festival was great. I think it was Richie's first tour with us, and he was fizzing by then. He loves the big stages."

For more details on 50 Metal Years visit www.rufuspublications.com/rufusbooks/judaspriest

ROSS HALFIN x4

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- Daniel Pavlica: The Rocktoligist

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The Orchard

RIP

Thank you
and good night.

Gerry McGee

August 15, 1962 – August 25, 2020

The Canadian melodic hard rock community is mourning the passing of the Brighton Rock frontman at the age of 58. Glasgow-born McGee sang on each of the group's three full-length albums and appeared with them at the UK's Firefest in 2012 and '13. He had been battling cancer.

John Meyer

Died September 1, 2020

Antipodean brawlers Rose Tattoo broke the news of the passing of their slide guitarist from 1983 to '85. Meyer appeared on the albums *Southern Stars* and *Beats From A Single Drum*. The Perth-born musician, writer and producer also played with the Australian bands Saracen, Swanee and Chain. He was 64.

Simeon Coxe

June 4, 1938 – September 4, 2020

Tennessee-born Simeon Oliver Coxe III was one half of the cult electronic duo Silver Apples, the band he formed with drummer Danny Taylor in 1967. They ran until 1970, then regrouped in the 90s. The 82-year-old had been suffering from the progressive lung condition pulmonary fibrosis.

Sid McCray

Died September 9, 2020

Sid McCray is credited with introducing the members of Washington DC hardcore pioneers Bad Brains to punk rock. He was the frontman with the band from 1977 to '78, before being replaced by HR for the group's self-titled debut album in 1982. His age and a cause of death are unannounced.

Roy Head

January 9, 1941 – September 21, 2020

With Roy Head And The Traits, Texan-born singer Head scored a No.2 hit with *Treat Her Right* in 1965. The song was later covered by Jimmy Page, Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen. ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons described the 79-year-old a "rock 'n' soul phenomenon".

Riley Gale

May 2, 1985 – August 24, 2020

Members of Slipknot, Machine Head, Anthrax and Slayer are among those who have paid tribute to the singer with Texan heavyweights Power Trip following his sudden death at the age of 34. *Classic Rock*'s sister title *Metal*

Lee Kerslake

April 16, 1947 – September 19, 2020

Former Uriah Heep and Ozzy Osbourne drummer Lee Kerslake has died at the age of 77 following a long-running battle with cancer. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2014 and the disease spread through his body. Five years later doctors advised him to arrange his affairs over the following eight months. Lee never gave up the fight, recording a final album, *Eleventeen* to be released posthumously and setting up the ongoing filming of an autobiographical documentary, *Not On The Heep*, that examines the unique bonds of friendship between musicians. Def Leppard's Joe Elliott, Ian Paice of Deep Purple and Kiss's Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons are among those to appear in his film.

Kerslake was born in Winton, near Bournemouth. His first band of significance was The Gods, followed by Toe Fat and the National Head Band. He joined Uriah Heep in late 1971, and their first album with him was *Demons And Wizards*. As well as a forceful pounder of the kit, he was also a writer and an integral part of the group's five-part vocal harmonies. However, during the 70s their internal politics were unforgiving and, at the behest of keyboard player Ken Hensley, manager and record label boss Gerry Bron fired him following 1978's *Fallen Angel* album. He returned to Heep in '81

In 1980 Kerslake joined up with Ozzy Osbourne in a new band, Blizzard Of Ozz, which featured guitar hotshot Randy Rhoads. Along with bassist Bob Daisley, Kerslake was fired following a second album, *Diary Of A Madman*, for which Tommy Aldridge and Rudy Sarzo were falsely credited. Later on, their parts were re-recorded by drummer Mike Bordin and bassist Robert Trujillo. Although his and Daisley's performances were eventually restored, their sacking and lack of acknowledgement and financial restitution left a bitter taste.

In 2007 declining health forced Kerslake to leave his beloved Heep for a final time. Having made peace with Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne as the extent of his illness dawned, Kerslake finally received his multi-platinum awards for Ozzy's first two albums. In 2019 Kerslake told *Classic Rock*: "Since I've known that I'm dying I no longer want to hold a grudge. I want to go with a clear conscience. They [the Osbournes] know I haven't got much longer left. They [the discs] are all I wanted. That's it. Everything is done and dusted."

Kerslake also wiped the slate clean with his former Heep bandmate Ken Hensley who had instigated his sacking. Indeed it was Hensley who broke the news of Kerslake's passing, and said he was "my friend of 55 years and the best drummer I ever played with".

Heep guitarist Mick Box, who was filled with grief at the news, posted a photograph of the two of them in a bear hug following Kerslake's final cameo with Heep at Shepherd's Bush Empire in 2018, and described him as "one of the kindest men on earth, a brother and an incredible drummer, singer and songwriter". "Rock in peace, my friend," Box wrote in conclusion, "and say hi to [former Heep members] David [Byron], Gary [Thain], John [Wetton] and Trevor [Bolder] for me."

Ozzy Osbourne commented: "It's been 39 years since I saw Lee but he lives for ever on the records he played on for me, *Blizzard Of Ozz* and *Diary Of A Madman*. Lee Kerslake RIP."

Eighteen months ago, with Kerslake aware that his time was running out, *Classic Rock* asked him how he would like to be remembered.

"As one of the great drummers in rock music and as a songwriter," was his solemn reply. "I'm underappreciated as a writer. People just don't know that me, Randy and Bob wrote *Diary Of A Madman*.

"I hope people think of me as a decent human being," he added. "I don't think I'm an asshole, I like myself." **DL**

GETTY

Toots Hibbert

December 8, 1942 – September 11, 2020

Mick Jagger and Bonnie Raitt are among those who have paid tribute to reggae musician Toots Hibbert. The Rolling Stones frontman lamented the passing of the 77-year-old as "a great loss to the whole music world". Raitt said: "He's a fireball, you know. He was just a force."

Frederick Nathaniel 'Toots' Hibbert was born in Kingston, Jamaica. As the leader of Toots And The Maytals he was a pioneering figure in ska and reggae music, credited with inventing the very word 'reggae', and a songwriter whose compositions were covered by The Clash, The Specials, Keith Richards, Izzy Stradlin, Gov't Mule, Robert Palmer, Willie Nelson, Amy Winehouse and more.

Hibbert fronted The Maytals (later going by the name Toots And The Maytals) from the early 1960s. In 1968, while writing a novelty song about a passing dance craze, Toots mis-pronounced the Jamaican term 'streggae' as 'reggae', giving rise to a whole new term.

"In Jamaica we had a slang," he told the BBC. "If we're not looking so good, if we're looking raggedy, we'd call it 'streggae'. That's where I took it from." The song *Do The Reggay* instead came to define the sound being developed by bands such as the Maytals and the Wailers.

"I never knew it was gonna be so prevalent, or so good," he told the *Independent* just last month. "But it feels good to know I was the one who put the 'R' in the music."

By the late 1960s, Toots & The Maytals had a string of hits, including *Pressure Drop, 54-46 (That's My Number)* and *Monkey Man*. Mick Jagger later commented: "When I first heard *Pressure Drop*, that was a big moment."

In 1971 the band signed to Island Records, and the following year appeared in the movie *The Harder They Come* and contributed two songs to the soundtrack. Critically acclaimed albums including *Funky Kingston* (1972) and *Reggae Got Soul* ('76) followed, and the band toured the world supporting artists including the Eagles and Jackson Browne.

The UK punk movement embraced Hibbert's music too, with The Clash covering *Pressure Drop* in 1978 and the Specials including a cover of *Monkey Man* on their debut album the following year. The ska punk scene of the 90s was also indebted to his sound and artists frequently covered his songs.

"I've always thought Toots And The Maytals were the punk rock of reggae," Zak Starkey, drummer with The Who and co-producer of Hibbert's final album, told *Rolling Stone* last month. "We had a lot of reggae playing in my house as a kid, and the feeling I got from Toots was the same I got from The Who — a feeling of aggression and excitement, the songs were about something."

To this day, Toots And The Maytals have had more Jamaican chart-topping singles – and more No.2s – than any other artist. Their album *True Love* won a Grammy in 2005. Hibbert's latest record, *Got To Be Tough*, was released on August 28.

A connection with the Stones, who invited the band to open on their Bigger Bang tour, remained strong. Having performed a duet with Hibbert in 2004, Keith Richards praised Toots to *Rolling Stone* magazine, saying: "His voice reminds me very much of the timbre of [soul great] Otis Redding. When you hear him do *Pain In My Heart* it's an uncanny resemblance. Whenever I get a call from Toots I go running."

Stones guitarist Ronnie Wood added: "I have very happy memories of playing with Toots, a lovely man and a great talent."

The Who, who were supported by the Maytals on a 1975 US tour, tweeted: "Rest in peace".

Chris Blackwell, founder of the band's label Island Records, said: "Toots was just a joy of a human being, a really special person."

Cause of death is yet yet to be confirmed. Hibbert was admitted to hospital at the end of August and tested for coronavirus. **SR**

GETTY

Hammer described Gale as "a man who embodied the very best that heavy music had to offer".

Sammy 'Shmoulik' Avigal

August 5, 1954 – July 30, 2020

Israeli Avigal was the singer on the 1982 album *Diamond Dreamer* by Dutch rockers Picture. After relocating to America he joined The Rods for and appeared on their album *Heavier Than Thou*, and then sang with Jack Starr before going on to form his own band, Avigal. The 65-year-old died of cancer.

Ian Mitchell

August 22, 1958 – September 1, 2020

Ian Mitchell was most famous for joining pop group the Bay City Rollers in 1976, at the age of 17. He quit just seven months later and went on to perform with Rosetta Stone and the Ian Mitchell Band, among others. The Northern Irishman was 62 at the time of his death due to unknown causes.

Peter Starkie

Died September 13, 2020

The original guitarist with Australian rockers Skyhooks has died at the age of 72 in a tragic accident, falling off a ladder at his home in Melbourne. Peter Starkie left Skyhooks in 1973, and two years later became a member of Jo Jo Zep & The Falcons.

Tony Constanza

July 2, 1968 – August 4, 2020

Tony Constanza was the original drummer with Californian metal band Machine Head. He stepped down due to insecurity over his ability to perform adequate double bass drum parts during the build up to the release of their debut album, 1994's *Burn My Eyes*. He later went on to play with Crowbar, among others. He was 52. No cause of death has been announced

Örjan 'Dr Rock' Englin

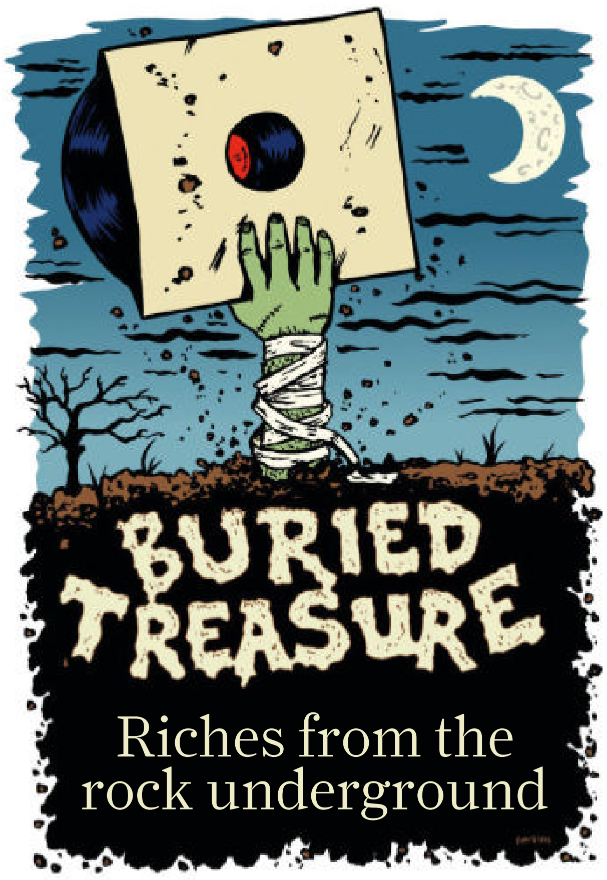
September 24, 1962 – August 7, 2020

Örjan Englin began his career with the Swedish band Hiroshima, and went on to join Dust. A statement from his bandmates described Örjan as "a great guy with a huge heart", and explained that the percussionist "suddenly passed away without warning, leaving everyone in shock". 'Dr Rock' was 57 years old.

Jerilyn Lee Brandelius

June 25, 1948 – August 31, 2020

Writer, photographer and California native Brandelius was a part of the Grateful Dead's inner circle from 1972 onwards. Her book *The Grateful Dead Family Album* was published in 1989. Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir is reported to have serenaded Jerilyn Lee with *Brokedown Palace* as masked loved ones surrounded the 72-year-old on her deathbed.



BURIED TREASURE

Riches from the rock underground

DRAMA

Drama, Philips, Netherlands, 1972. £450+ (first pressing).

Drama were a short-lived band, seemingly ruined by the success of a hit single they hated.

Their self-titled album straddles prog, hard rock and blues, and while not an all-out classic it does include moments of excellence. It gets off to a strong start with opener *I Dreamed I Was The President*, a heads-down rocker sporting a heavy Hawkwind-esque lead riff, contrasting with a gentler, melodic chorus. Why they chose to kill that momentum by following it directly with a drawn out seven-minute-plus rendition of *I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man* is baffling. It's by no means bad, it just seems pointless and is no more than filler.

Fortunately, it isn't quite game over, as more greatness follows, albeit in a less rocking manner. The aptly titled instrumental *Melodrama*, weaves between mellow Hammond/Mellotron motifs and doom-laden chords, topped off with tasty lead guitar. *Smile Or Yell* is a gentle prog outing with a country rock(ish) chorus and enigmatic lyrics. *Brains Or Not* brings back a welcome heavy-versus-mellow atmosphere (complete with phasing) to great effect and is possibly the album's high point.

> **'While not an all-out classic, it does include moments of excellence.'**

Drama were cursed with a common dilemma of the times: reviews of the album were positive, but sales were poor. The label more or less demanded a commercial single, which is exactly what they got with *Mary's Mama*. But while the label got what they wanted, the band felt compromised and sadly fell apart as a result. **LD**

NEWS

Diamond Head used lockdown to record a fortieth-anniversary remake of their celebrated debut album. *Lightning To The Nations 2020* includes bonus covers of Judas Priest's *Sinner*, Deep Purple's *Rat Bat Blue*, Led Zeppelin's *Immigrant Song* and Metallica's *No Remorse*. It's released on November 20

Smashing Pumpkins release *Cyr*, their eleventh studio album, on November 27 via Sumerian Records.

Despite the recent death of drummer Frankie Banali, **Quiet Riot** say they will not be splitting up. "It was Frankie's wish that the band continue and we keep the music and the legacy alive into 2021 and beyond," said a statement. Banali succumbed to pancreatic cancer on August 20.

Eric Burdon has responded with a mixture of resignation and amusement to Donald Trump's adoption of his former band The Animals' 1964 hit *House Of The Rising Sun* at his campaign rallies. "I wasn't surprised to learn [the news]," he Tweeted. "A tale of sin and misery set in a brothel suits him so perfectly."

Ozzy Osbourne (pictured) insists that he has no interest in performing live again with Black Sabbath, who wound up their career in 2017, although he does regret not getting to play one last time with original drummer Bill Ward. "I felt really bad about [Bill not being a part of that]," he told *Rolling Stone*. "It would have been so nice."

WELCOME BACK

Jakko Jakszyk

King Crimson's guitarist/vocalist on his new solo record, the re-evaluation of prog, and an extraordinary funeral.

FOR THE PAST seven years, Jakko Jakszyk's day job has been as guitarist/vocalist with King Crimson, the only band where (in Bill Bruford's words)"you can regularly play in fifteen/eight and still stay in nice hotels". With side projects also on the cards, 2020 was set to be a busy year for him. "I was going to finish the solo record, and I was working on a one-man show that I was going to do at the Fringe in Edinburgh."

With live performances halted due to covid-19, Jakszyk (born Michael Lee Curran) was able to spend more time completing his first solo album in more than a decade. *Secrets & Lies* is an enveloping fusion of stirring melodies, jagged proggy guitars and atmospheric textures, much of it inspired by his own complex, compelling family history (the focus of the aforementioned one-man show).

> **"Robert Fripp asked me to sing the opening verse of *Peace* in Japanese."**

How much of the dark, brooding tone of the record was a product of this odd year we're having?
If it has a cohesive thing it's probably to do with stuff in my personal life. A lot of the songs involve people telling both secrets and lies… I was adopted as a child and I met my real mum when I was in my early twenties, but in the intervening years I've found out all sorts of other stuff. So the whole 'secrets and lies' thing kind of came out of that.

There are flavours of artists like Steven Wilson, Tim Bowness and the Pineapple Thief on the record. How do you feel about the way people like this have picked up the prog torch?
It's lovely to see the re-evaluation of it as a genre, because at one point it was the most hated. I remember being in a band in about seventy-eight and the support band were one of these new punk groups. I'm on stage, and I'm suddenly aware of this bloke standing far too close, staring straight at me, and he said to his mate: "Get this geezer. He can play the guitar, *really* well. What a wanker" [laughs].

Your song *The Rotters Club Is Closing Down* is a tribute to drummer Pip Pyle.
Pip behaved appallingly, but he did it with such charm he seemed to get away with it. The funeral was extraordinary. It had no pomp, it had that hippie freedom to it. When his coffin came in it had all these backstage/tour stickers on it, like it was a flight case at a gig.

Crimson's Robert Fripp co-wrote two tracks on the album. Is it true that Bill Bruford once described him as a combination of Gandhi and Stalin?
Ha! So we'd been making a documentary with this guy Toby Amies. I spoke to Toby afterwards and said: "Did Robert say anything as a result of anyone on screen saying something?" He said: "Yes, he said you were quoting Bill Bruford, where Bill says: 'Robert Fripp is a combination of Gandhi, Josef Stalin and the Marquis De Sade.'" "What did Robert say?" "All leaders in their field."

So if Fripp is Gandhi/Stalin, who are you in the King Crimson family?
Did you see the seventies TV series *Kung Fu*? The main guy keeps going to this master who sets him tasks. That's what I feel like. For example, we were in Japan, and he [Fripp] says: "Jakko, wouldn't it be good if you could sing the opening verse [of King Crimson's *Peace*] in Japanese!" And I did. **PG**

Secrets & Lies is released on October 23 via InsideOut.

JAKKO JAKSZYK: TINA KORHONEN

“We’re doing different shit that you haven’t heard before. And you should love it.”

★ HIGH HOPES

The OBGMs

“We’re your new leaders!” announce the trio who’ve got it in for the music business.

“We don’t believe in playing by the rules,” states Densil McFarlane, singer/guitarist with The OBGMs. “We want you to like us because we’re fucking Nirvana, The Beatles and the Rolling Stones. We’re out here doing different shit that you haven’t heard before. And you should love it.”

As you might gather from that, McFarlane isn’t shy when it comes to self-promotion. He does make a convincing case, though. The Canadian trio’s post-hardcore racket might have antecedents in the likes of Black Flag, Hüsker Dü or Pixies, but The OBGMs’ music is delivered with such unbridled ferocity and melodic vigour that it feels bracingly fresh.

Their latest album *The Ends* rushes by in a blur of punk-metal riffs, sharp beats and combative vocals. It transpires that this emphatic statement of intent was born of frustration and creative block. Shortly after McFarlane returned from the band’s last tour he underwent a crisis of confidence.

“I was struggling with this thing that I’d spent well over a decade in,” he admits. “Working so hard but feeling that we weren’t going anywhere. And it’s tough. I went back into my bunker, and realised that I hated everything I’d ever written – every single song. I just questioned if I was good enough to be doing this.”

Having co-founded The OBGMs in Toronto with drummer Colanthony Humphrey in 2007, originally as a hip-hop production team, McFarlane eventually decided to redouble his efforts. Recording and performing wasn’t enough.

“I realised I needed to work harder and find a strategy in order to make something bigger,” he explains. “I’m a notorious hermit and not particularly friendly, but I started putting myself out there more. And I met a bunch of cool people who believed in us, including Dave Schiffman, who ended up producing the record. So yeah, I came back.”

The OBGMs (an acronym for The Ooh Baby Gimme Mores) were a four-piece when they cut their self-titled debut of 2017. Joe Brosnan remains on bass, but they’ve since dispensed with their synth player and, under the guidance of Schiffman (whose credits include Red Hot Chili Peppers and Rage Against The Machine) focused their approach into something heavier and sharper.

The Ends’ lyrics are an uncompromising manifesto from a band who’ve opted to take on the music business in their own brusque way. *Cash* is a prime example.

“We weren’t getting noticed,” McFarlane says, “so I was like: ‘The next person who talks about bands in Toronto without referencing us, I’m going to run up on their shit and take their money! It was just about being really aggressive. We never reject comparisons to other pioneers. But, that being said, it’s time for all people to start looking for new leaders. We’re your new leaders!” **RH**

The Ends is out on October 30 via Black Box.

FOR FANS OF...

NIRVANA

“BLEACH”

The OBGMs are wary of citing influences. “We do have influences in terms of artists who’ve had staying power over generations,” McFarlan explains, “but the main thing is the vibe. I love a lot of music – Nirvana, Billy Talent, The Beatles, the Stones - but we don’t sound like any of them. I don’t care about genres, I just want to make timeless music.”

AMANDA FOTES/PRESS

FREE
TONS OF SOBS

MY FIRST LOVE

Free

TONS OF SOBS

By Alan Nimmo

The King King singer/guitarist on a British blues-rock classic.

I first heard Free when I was about ten. My mother was a massive music fan, and she always used to play music in the house. The first Free song I heard was *Fire And Water*. I remember hearing the guitar tone and thinking: "I don't know what it is, but I love it." And then the voice came in and I was like: "Wow!"

Free's first album was a massive influence on me in terms of wanting to play and start a band. I was discovering blues music, and *Tons Of Sobs* is a very bluesy-styled rock album. There's a song on there, *Going Down Slow*, an old blues song, and that was the first version of that song I ever heard.

It was one of those raw-edged, beautiful albums. It was just a bunch of kids playing, but they had such a chemistry between them. That raw chemistry was something I got really interested in. I was drawn to that.

Looking back, *The Hunter* really jumped out. It was such an energetic tune that wasn't even their song, they just made it their own. Paul Rodgers had this amazing raw vocal, and there was that amazing raw-edged guitar. I definitely wanted to be a guitarist before I wanted to be a singer, and [guitarist] Paul Kossoff got right into my bones and stayed there. **PG**

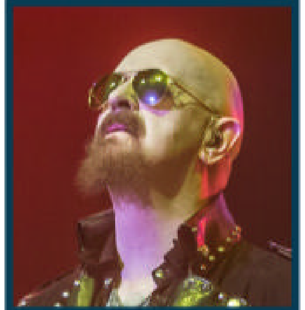
King King's new album Maverick is out on November 6 via Channel 9 Music.

NEWS

A deluxe edition of **UFO**'s live double album *Strangers In The Night* is released on November 20. The eight-CD boxed set collates all six shows recorded by the band on their 1978 US tour, which have been remixed and remastered, and includes a 24-page booklet featuring new interviews with Phil Mogg, Andy Parker and Michael Schenker. A clear-vinyl double LP version of UFO's show in Youngstown will also be made available.

Todd Rundgren has previewed his forthcoming album *Space Force* with the release of a single, *Espionage*, made in collaboration with the Iraqi/Canadian hip-hop artist Narcy. *Space Force*, which features feature Sparks and Rivers Cuomo of Weezer, will be released in early 2021 via Cleopatra Records.

Although there has not yet been any official comment, it looks as though **Rammstein** are working on a new album, with speculation that the German band have returned to La Fabrique Studios in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France.



Rob Halford (pictured) is making… a blues album. The Judas Priest frontman is working with the players from last year's Christmas record, *Celestial*, although he has no idea when the project will be finished. "There's no timeline," Halford told a radio interviewer. "We're kicking the tyres, and I've already got some bits of ideas and they sound great."

WELCOME BACK

Jefferson Starship

With former members involved in their new record, it seems you can check out, but you can never leave.

BORN OUT OF SAN Franciscan psychedelic pioneers Jefferson Airplane, the Starship beam down their first set of new songs in 12 years. Vocalist/guitarist David Freiberg explains why *Mother Of The Sun* is "a little long for an EP and too short for an album", and how former lead vocalist and fellow founder Grace Slick came to contribute to its birth.

Guitarist and torch-bearer Paul Kantner passed away in 2016. It must have been very difficult to continue without him?
Yeah, it was quite a blow, though his health meant that Paul missed quite a few gigs during those final years. So we're kind of used to [playing without him]. Paul was a friend since 1962, so of course I still miss him.

> "I feel as good performing with this line-up as I did any other."

***Mother Of The Sun* is a six-song mini-album, seven including a repeated tune. Jefferson Starship are more of an albums band aren't they?**
This is all we could get together given our touring schedule. We thought that it would be good to let out what we had. But now, thanks to covid-19, we have all the time in the world [laughs].

Current lead vocalist Cathy Richardson co-wrote *It's About Time* with guitarist Jude Gold and none other than original singer Grace Slick. Hasn't Grace retired from music?
She has, but Cathy was staying with her daughter China, who lived with Grace. The three of them were inspired by women's marches on TV, and Cathy invited Grace to write some lyrics. A few months later she received an envelope containing pages of words with a note from Grace saying: "Use any of these or none of these."

The ballad *Don't Be Sad Anymore* was written by former lead singer Marty Balin, who died in 2018, and current keyboard player Chris Smith.
Yeah. I had never heard the original version, so for me it was a brand new song. We gave it the whole Tony Bennett treatment [laughs].

Original Jefferson Starship bassist Pete Sears plays on three tracks, but he isn't part of the band.
Pete had time to do those songs. He really wanted to play on them. Could he possibly rejoin someday? I think we would love that, but he's a very busy guy.

Talking to *Classic Rock* back in 2007, Kantner described the band's pop era as "shit", saying: "That's why I left the band." Given that you were sacked that same year [1984], do you agree?
Well, there was becoming less and less for me to do. From *Nuclear Furniture* [1984], those records were very produced. I figured I'd do something else instead. I don't regret that.

Kantner also promised that a song he had written "about Mary Magdalen and her travels from the Holy Land to France" would appear on the band's next album.
I wish he had left something behind. All of his old [unrecorded] songs failed to turn up [after he died]. That was too bad.

So what are Jefferson Starship all about in 2020?
It's about playing. We're a family, and I feel as good performing with this line-up of the band as I did about any other. **DL**

Mother Of The Sun is available now via Golden Robot Records.

ROB HALFORD: KEVIN NIXON

★ HIGH HOPES

The Georgia Thunderbolts

Meet the new young guns taking up the torch and keeping the southern rock flame burning.

With an average age of 22, The Georgia Thunderbolts are the newest name to thrill fans of southern rock. The quintet, from Rome, Georgia, have spent the past five years sharing stages with the likes of Blackberry Smoke, Black Stone Cherry, The Cadillac Three and the Kentucky Headhunters. The latter's rhythm guitarist Richard Young was sufficiently impressed to take them under his management wing. Young brought TGT to the attention of Mascot Records, who signed them up after seeing them play just one gig and planned the group's debut album. "And then this covid monster hit," sighs lead vocalist, pianist and harmonica player TJ Lyle. Unable to tour, five songs were whittled down into a self-titled introductory EP.

The seeds of The Georgia Thunderbolts were sown by a high-school friendship between Lyle and guitarist Riley Couzzourt, who teamed up with the trio of guitarist Logan Tolbert, bass and keyboard player Zach Everett and drummer Bristol Perry.

The rampant enthusiasm of Richard Young has played its part in getting the group this far.

"We played with the Headhunters at an agricultural fair in Georgia," Lyle explains. "Richard heard us out of the back window of their bus. He jumped off the bus, saw our entire show and invited us to cut a record with him."

The EP provides a window into not only the influences that feed into the Georgia Thunderbolts – Hank Williams Jr, Neil Young, Little Feat and, most obviously, Lynyrd Skynyrd – but also the band's blue-collar values. Song titles include *Spirit Of A Workin' Man*, *Lend A Hand* and *So You Wanna Change The World*. So how would Lyle like to change the world?

"Everybody needs to find their own happiness," he fires back. "Own up to your mistakes and you're halfway there. Our positivity comes from within and we write about the things that affect us each day."

In terms of vocal phrasing and tone, Lyle definitely has that Ronnie Van Zant thing going on, and their song *Set Me Free* even references *Tuesday's Gone*. What if somebody says they're a little *too* close to Skynyrd?

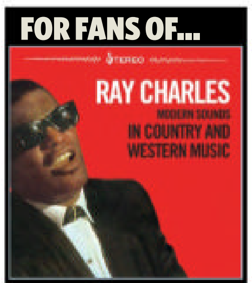
"We can't avoid that, and we won't deny their influence," he responds amiably. "We are who we are, man."

Not only are the Georgia Thunderbolts prepared to jump into a van and leave behind the picturesque foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, it's something the band members positively crave.

"We can't wait to go without showers and hit the road, especially to head overseas," Lyle enthuses, laughing. "In fact we've just been confirmed for next summer's Ramblin' Man Fair. You're the first person we've told that." **DL**

The Georgia Thunderbolts' self-titled EP is out now via Mascot Records.

FOR FANS OF...



"We're kind of like a mix of Bad Company and Lynyrd Skynyrd," TJ Lyle says. But if I can only pick one album – and this is a personal choice – then I'll go with the Ray Charles album *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music* [1962] That's among my biggest influences. It'll pick you up and it'll put you down again."

JIM ARBOGAST/PRESS

"We're kind of like a mix of Bad Company and Lynyrd Skynyrd."

Q&A

Corey Taylor

The Slipknot singer on partying sober, bringing up kids, mask-rejecting "idiots" and the fun of working in a porn shop.

Words: **Polly Glass**

This time last year, Corey Taylor was promoting a very different album. *We Are Not Your Kind*, his dark, deeply personal sixth with Slipknot, emerged from the aftermath of a "very toxic" relationship. "It was me purging myself of the poisons that one would kind of ascertain from escaping a cult, in a lot of ways," he says. "It was almost like I had to make that album to be able to make this one." By contrast, "this one", his debut solo record, *CMFT* (Corey Mother-Fucking Taylor), is a feelgood love letter to 80s hard rock, glam rock, rap and more – all big riffs and bigger tunes.

***CMFT* feels like a celebratory record.**
It really was recorded with that spirit in mind. I don't know if it's because we recorded live in the room, or the fact that we all enjoyed spending time together so much, but it just translates. And the songs were *fun*. The songs were just *good*.

It covers a lot of ground. What impression of you do you hope people will take from it?
I would love people to say: "Fuck, he can write a good song," y'know? That's the one thing I really pride myself on. I don't aspire to be the best singer in the world, I'm not the world's best guitarist, but I take all my talents and really try to hone them in my songwriting.

You once said you warm up your voice with Misfits, Pearl Jam and rap. *CMFT* is a pretty good reflection of that.
Absolutely. This is probably the first time I've been able to show the widest range of my influences. This is the first time I'm just sharing the styles that bring me joy.

Not all Slipknot fans will like it. Does that bother you?
I don't care really. I wanted to make an album that represents me. I'm a forty-six-year-old dude who's been doing this for over twenty years. So if people younger than me like it, I'll love it. If not, fair enough. If I had gone into this worrying about what Slipknot fans would say, I probably wouldn't have recorded it.

On the song *Home* you play piano. Is it true that the first thing you learned to play was the Rolling Stones' *I Got The Blues*?
Yeah. It was the first song I could play and sing at the same time. It's also one of my favourite Stones songs. There's such a wonderful yearning that comes with that song, especially at the end when everything's really hitting its apex and he's just imploring to the world.

***CMFT* is a party record. Having been sober for ten years, what makes a great party for you these days?**
The people. I am really blessed with having friends who I've had for going on decades, and we're all the biggest dorks on the planet. I've hit that cool point in my sobriety where it doesn't really bother me when people drink around me, because I know they're not going to get completely loaded and jump through my window.

Lockdown was a testing time for addicts. How has that side of your past – which began when you were a child – impacted the way you are with your own kids?
I basically look at everything I wanted as a kid, and I do that for my kids. I didn't meet my dad until I was thirty. My mum is kind of a nightmare of a person sometimes. So I wanted to make sure I will be there for my kids. I will make sure they don't have to worry about where food is going to come from, where their clothes will come from. It's a tricky situation, because sometimes you can overcorrect that course and spoil your kids. I didn't want that to happen either. It's about balance.

In this time of Covid-19, as someone who's worn a mask for much of your adult life what are your thoughts on those who refuse to wear one?
They're fucking idiots. It's the same fucking mentality that makes people fucking deny vaccines for their kids. It doesn't make any fucking sense to me.

In your last book [2017's *America 51*] you wrote about Trump's America. How do you feel about all that at this point?
Trump was the end result of something that had been building for a while; this strange distrust of intelligence, because people who are intelligent are prejudiced against people like that. They look down their noses at people they deem to be the 'unwashed, unkempt' masses… But that underlying tension started to rise because America deigned to elect a black man to be president. It showed the racist undertone in my country that was bubbling under the surface. But then the reaction to Obama is what caused Trump, and there's people like me sitting in the middle going: "Why does it have to be one extreme or the other?"

You worked in a porn shop in your early/mid-twenties. What did you learn about people from doing that job?
I learned that my aunt didn't realise I was working there! She came walking in at twelve-thirty, I was by the counter, and I'd *never* seen the colour drain from someone's face until that moment. She was all: "Oh, I'm lost, er…." It's Des Moines. If you get lost in Des Moines there's no hope for you [laughs]. I've gotta be honest, man, it was the most fun job I ever had. I keep threatening to write a book about my experiences there. You think there are freaks in LA? Try being a closeted crazy person in Des Moines, Iowa at that time. There was a lot of crazy shit going on, and they all came to my shop… But that was a good time to be alive.

Who would you rather play: Jean Valjean in *Les Miserables*, or Riff Raff in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*?
I spent ten years going to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and I was part of the cast every once in a while. When I didn't get too drunk they'd drag me up and I would play Riff Raff. So I *think* I would love the challenge of being Jean Valjean, because he's still my favourite literary character. That's something I've never really tried to do before – something a little more classically trained. I think I'd love the challenge of that. ●

CMFT is out now via Roadrunner.

ASHLEY OSBORN/PRESS

“I would love people to say: ‘F***k, he can write a good song.’”

6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT…

Rews

Shauna Tohill (now effectively a solo artist) is inspired by Trent Reznor, loves to rock out, and relies on her "inner child" for confidence.

Words: **Polly Glass** Photo: **Jude Palmer**

Shauna Tohill has just finished her hospital shift when *Classic Rock* calls her one rainy Thursday in August. Since lockdown put her/Rews' touring plans on hold, the singer/guitarist has been working there as a physiotherapy assistant. "I'm a massage therapist on the side of music," she says, "so it made sense to do something like that and help people out as much as I could at this time."

That empathetic streak is reflected in Rews' new album, *Warriors*, which taps in to the sort of anxieties and relationship turmoil most of us face. A matured step up from their 2017 debut *Pyro*, it's a melodic, urgent mash-up of prime-cut 90s sensibilities and the sort of sounds Blondie might have made if they'd jammed with Queens Of The Stone Age.

Warriors captures the best bits of the 90s.

When they started out as a duo, Rews were often compared (with good reason) to Royal Blood. *Warriors* has retained the distorted grooviness that brought those sorts of comparisons, but mixes it with a buzzy, addictive spread of Nirvana and Garbage-esque tones – from the ballsy, emotive drive of *Monsters* to the stirring *Bad Habits*. "I pull a lot of inspiration from Nine Inch Nails and Trent Reznor generally, and I love nineties music," Tohill says. "I think it's always going to be in the core of my songwriting."

Shauna Tohill _is_ Rews.

Since parting ways amicably with drummer Collette Williams last year, Tohill has become the face of Rews. In the background this didn't change things a great deal (she already did much of the writing herself), but leaving the relative safety of the duo framework has involved some adjusting for the shy frontwoman.

"I've never really wanted to be right up in front," she admits. "I love writing and creating, and sometimes I would love to just be in the background. I miss the concept of the band, but I feel like it might come round to that at some point again, it's just [a case of] making sure that the right people come on board."

The secret of her on-stage confidence is the child within.

Anyone who has seen Rews' high-octane rock show will know that Tohill is no wallflower when under the spotlight. Growing up in Northern Ireland, it was Avril Lavigne and Evanescence's Amy Lee who pulled her out of her shell. Now she hopes her songs can offer that help to others.

"When I first started writing songs, I sort of pretended I was like them; I wanted to be rocking out the way they did," she says. "That kind of thing really helped me as a child. I found it difficult to even talk to people without blushing. But now I just get lost in an 'inner child' within me. That sounds really hippie, but it works."

It all began in rural Northern Ireland.

Born and raised in the small town of Magherafelt, Tohill was "thrown" into music. Her grandmother was the celebrated folk singer Eileen Donaghy, and her parents played in a showband. As a child Tohill would jump in during their rehearsals. "Probably developed tinnitus at about that point," she says wryly. "I don't think anyone was really aware of how sensitive ears are at that point."

By the time she was 13 she was writing songs and going to pub gigs. "There was a bar called Brysons, which was kind of a rock bar, that I started going to when I was about thirteen or fourteen, which is very young but it was fine at the time."

As a session musician, Tohill played to thousands with Snow Patrol.

In her early twenties she moved to Cirencester for a four-month artist residency, where she "lived off the land" and worked in rehab centres and care homes.

Meanwhile, the seeds of Rews began to germinate. Inspired, she moved to London, where she worked as a session guitarist, bassist and singer for a range of bands before starting Rews. "I got to sing with Snow Patrol at the EMA awards, and it was the first time I could really feel the audience's voices," she recalls. "It blew me away!"

It's all about the running, not the raving.

Out on headline tours – as well as supports with the likes of The Darkness and Halestorm – Tohill appreciates early nights and morning runs. It's been an ideal way to experience some of the cities she's travelled to, when free time is often short. "I go for a run most mornings and it sets me up for the day. I love Germany and it's so beautiful to run around." ●

Warriors is out now via Marshall Records.

THE ★CLASSIC★ ROCK INTERVIEW

JIMMY PAGE

From his 'Excalibur moment' with the guitar to The Yardbirds to (re)inventing hard rock with Led Zeppelin and beyond, Jimmy Page's journey has seen good times, bad times and everything in between. Stand by for an intimate conversation with the man who shaped music as we know it.

Interview: **Ian Fortnam** Portrait: **Ross Halfin**

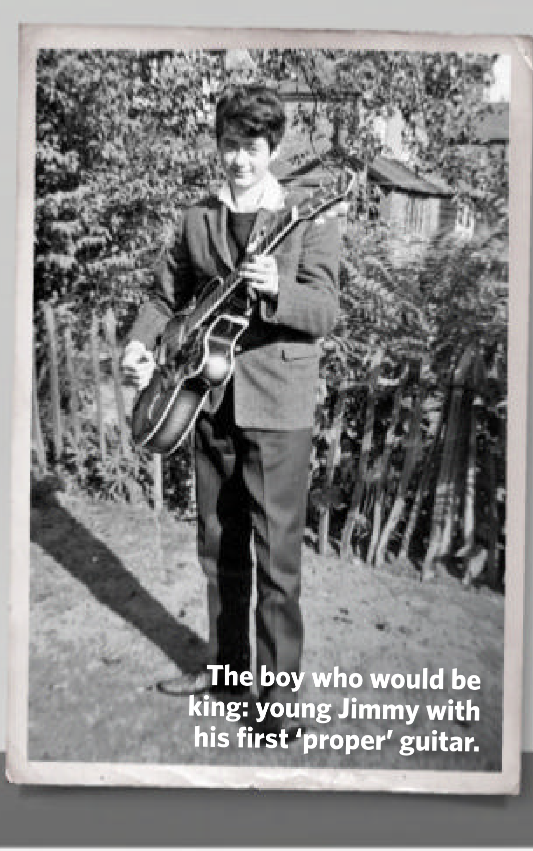
Thanks to the unexpected intervention of a discarded acoustic guitar, James Patrick Page found himself perfectly equipped to deal with rock'n'roll's 'youth explosion' as it irresistibly infected his formative 1950s.

Graduating from skiffle through rockabilly to blues by duplicating riffs on records, he taught himself to improvise, honing his craft with The Paramounts and Red E Lewis and The Redcaps, before becoming the hottest young guitar slinger on the burgeoning 60s session scene. Jimmy Page gravitated from studio anonymity to pop stardom when he joined The Yardbirds in '66. Two years later, upon the band's ultimate dissolution, he formed Led Zeppelin, with whom he rapidly conquered the world.

A half-century later, Jimmy Page – arguably rock's greatest and most celebrated guitarist – is in lockdown. Just like the rest of us. He's been busy: putting the finishing touches to his second autobiographical work, *Jimmy Page: The Anthology,* a weighty tome from Genesis Publications that concentrates on the 'details behind the details' of his extraordinary life; and playing again. Lockdown has "given me an opportunity to reconnect properly with the guitar," Page says down the telephone line. No hotel suite get-together in this new normal, just 105 minutes of revelatory chat, during the course of which he admits he's had "a bit of a charmed life, there's no doubt about that", and talks himself hoarse. Here's what he said.

The first image in *Anthology* is a photograph of you singing in the choir at St. Barnabas Church in Epsom, presumably your first experience of public performance. Were you a willing chorister, or did you need coercion from your parents?

No, not at all from my parents. I voluntarily went to the church and joined up with the choir. I was compelled to. One reason why I would do that is because in those days rock'n'roll appeared on the airwaves and then it was stamped on by the BBC, et cetera, so you would find ways to actually hear music. We were lucky in Epsom, because there was an external swimming baths, and it had an area where there were amusements – pinball machines and a jukebox. It was like a pilgrimage to the jukebox, but the big boys used to go there, and I was quite young at that point. The church had a youth club where there'd be a dance and they'd play records, but to be in the youth club, you had to be in the choir. And I enjoyed being a choirboy, actually. I really did.

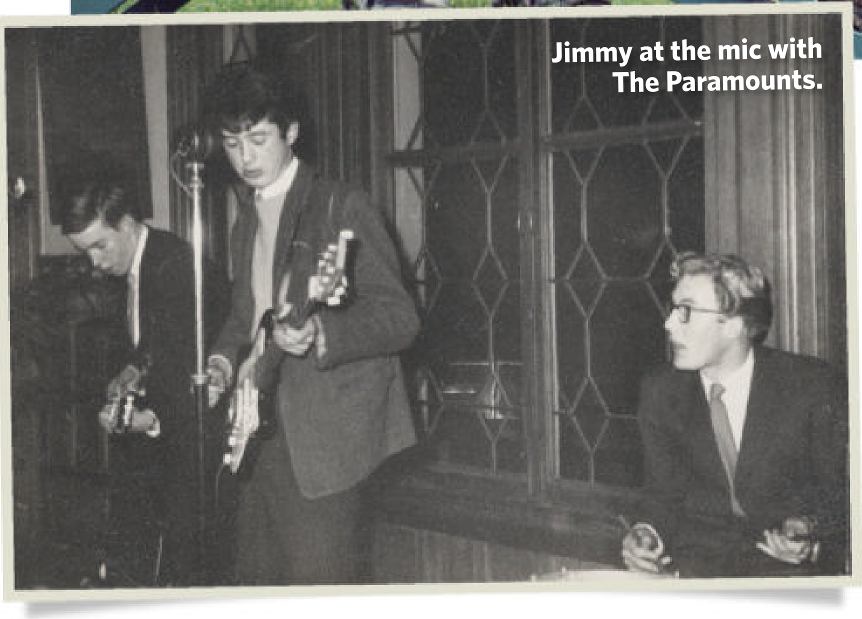

The boy who would be king: young Jimmy with his first 'proper' guitar.

And you got to wear the surplice [the white linen vestment worn by choristers]. It must have been your first excuse to wear fancy clothes.

Absolutely. You're right. You can see a connection, can't you? Decking oneself out for the performance [laughs]. ▷

INSET: © JIMMY PAGE ARCHIVE 2019

The short-lived Page/Beck Yardbirds: (l-r) Chris Dreja, Keith Relf, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Jim McCarty, 1965/66.



Jimmy at the mic with The Paramounts.

“Once I heard rock’n’roll I was infected by it, and there wasn’t going to be a cure. I didn’t wanna be cured.”

As a child you experienced hi-fi sound for the first time thanks to your neighbour’s stereo. It seems that from the very beginning you weren’t entranced just by music but also by the process of capturing sound, because, in many ways, therein lies the magic.

Yes. Thinking back to write the book, I thought about pivotal points. And when I lived in Feltham [Page’s home prior to Epsom], my parents and I were invited to someone’s house just down the road, and he had this stereo set-up. What he played at the time were some sound-effects records, the classic one being of the train going across the speakers, that sort of thing. And for a young boy this was pretty amazing stuff. I was probably about eight. And he played some classical music, and you really felt the depth of it. There’s absolutely no doubt that had a serious effect on me.

What is interesting in the equation is that there wasn’t anybody in my family who played guitar. I had an uncle who played pub piano. He could play various songs, but he never taught me anything. He wasn’t willing to teach, but when we moved from Feltham to Miles Road, in Epsom, there was a guitar left behind in our new house by the previous owners. And that was like a really weird intervention, where the guitar sort of found me.

That is such a great Excalibur story.

It honestly is. It’s like, whether I wanted to be a musician or not, I was going to be one. But yes, I was fascinated by the whole process of being enveloped by sound and being part of it. And also, being in a choir, there’s the whole ambience of it. It’s funny how I was picking it up as a kid. And once it came to the point of hearing rock’n’roll coming from America, it was just a youth explosion of music. I’m so fortunate to have been born at that time, to witness that moment. It was like a line: on one side of it everything is very quaint and old-fashioned, and suddenly there’s this whole explosion of adrenaline, music and attitude. So you’re listening to all this stuff, and it’s like it came from another planet. And I had a guitar sitting in the house – untuned; nobody had ever played it. And then there was a connection I made with this friend Rod at school, who showed me a few chords. And that was it. Once I heard rock’n’roll I was infected by it, really, and there wasn’t going to be a cure. I didn’t wanna be cured.

When your ‘Excalibur’ guitar outlived its usefulness, your parents bought you your first proper guitar, your Hofner. They appear to have supported your musical endeavors from day one.

They certainly did. I always had to do my schoolwork as well, but they could see that all of the rest of the time I was obsessed with the guitar. And when I started playing songs that they’d heard on the radio, they were like, wait a minute, he’s really getting into this seriously! I don’t know where it ever went, but that original guitar wasn’t the easiest to play. The strings were miles away from the fingerboard – not too far away that they would inhibit one from wanting to play it, but my parents said: “We’d like to get you a better guitar,” and the Hofner was the particular one they agreed to get. My dad could understand that, suddenly, his son’s playing the guitar that was left behind in the house, and Christmas is coming, and my birthday wasn’t far away, so the Hofner came as a multiple present. [Page was born on January 9, 1944.] And boy, oh boy, I was really thrilled to bits to have that.

But then it got to the point where all the music I was listening to was being played on solid-bodied guitars, so I said: “I need to trade in my guitar.” And their attitude was: “You can do that, but you’re going to have to pay for it.” In those days, up to the age of twenty-one your parents had to sign for you to pay on an installment plan. So my dad said: “I’ll be the guarantor, but you’ll have to pay for it.” And that was fine.

THE
Yardbirds'
LITTLE GAMES

MAIN: SHUTTERSTOCK. INSET: © JIMMY PAGE ARCHIVE 2019

Equipped with your solid-bodied Futurama, you graduated through The Paramounts to Red E Lewis and the Redcaps at the age of just fifteen. Both groups seem very much based in rock'n'roll and rockabilly.

At that point I hadn't really come across the blues; all those early sets with The Paramounts were definitely rock'n'roll, and not skiffle. I was playing with a band as an opening act on a Friday or Saturday night, and I got head hunted by Red E Lewis to go and play in London. Which was pretty amazing for somebody who was still at school. And then I was asked to join Neil Christian And The Crusaders. And there's quite a lot that goes on at that point, because by then I'd found the [Gibson Les Paul Custom] Black Beauty.

Page at home in 1970, and (left) Yardbirds days in '66.

You went to the American Folk Blues Festival in Manchester in 1962, which seems to have been a pivotal moment. [The event featured Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, Memphis Slim, Willie Dixon, T-Bone Walker and many others.] Blues seemed to usurp rock'n'roll in your affections, and indirectly led you to art school in 1963.

In the Neil Christian And The Crusaders set-list, we were doing *Train Kept A-Rollin', Honey Hush* and that sort of thing, but we were also doing Chuck Berry's *No Money Down* and Elmore James's *Dust My Broom*. But when you were playing dance halls, which we were, they just wanted Top 20 material. But I was really keen to play the blues. And when I say "the blues", definitely the Chess catalogue, and it was in advance of everything that was going to come.

And down south, obviously, it was the Stones who really brought that into the spotlight. But we were in advance of that. At the Manchester festival, I met Mick and Keith. They didn't have the Stones then, they were just blues enthusiasts on a pilgrimage, like all of us. And we were in a house where the guy had just got the Howlin' Wolf album with the rocking chair on the cover [Wolf's self-titled second album of 1962, a collection of 12 previously released Chess Records singles]. Nobody had heard it up until then, but we all heard it that day. So yes, that was one life-changing thing.

> **"I met Mick and Keith at the Manchester blues festival. They didn't have the Stones then, they were just blues enthusiasts on a pilgrimage, like all of us."**

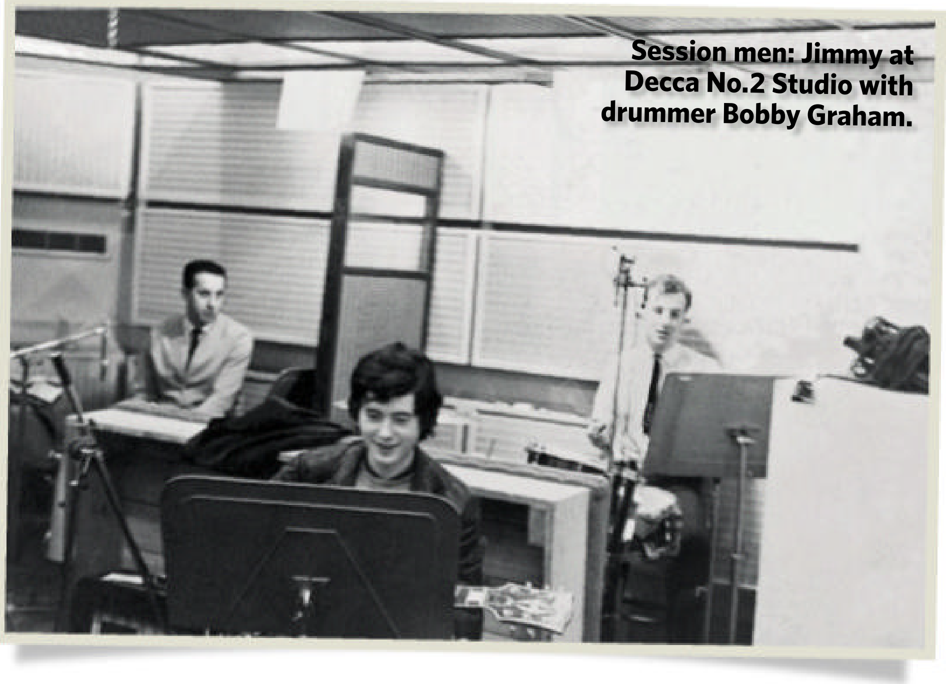
With music changing so rapidly in the early to mid-sixties, I imagine you were unique in the session world for your ability to speak this new musical language. You had the blues in your vocabulary, while your contemporary veteran players were essentially products of Tin Pan Alley.

Yes, I could fit in right across the board in the session world, and I was really, really in there. There's no doubt about it – I was officially in.

And your tastes stretched into areas that were exotic for the early sixties. You had a sitar very early on. You listened to Alan Lomax's field recordings, flamenco, and Indian and Arabic music, elements of which you would later incorporate into your recordings with The Yardbirds and Led Zeppelin.

I'd listened to Indian music. I'd accessed that on the radio. And this was way in advance of The Beatles. My father worked in a factory near Heathrow where they made wire and cables. Not guitar cables, big industrial stuff. He was the personnel manager. There were a lot of Asians working there, and I said: "Dad, would you ask around and see if anyone there knows anything about sitars? See if anyone can access one from over there." And there was a guy who said he's going to get one sent over. and it arrived in this makeshift plywood box. In those days you could freight things, and people would take care. Now it would probably be smashed to pieces. It had loads of straw in the box, and I took out the sitar, and there was this beautiful thing. I had absolutely no idea how to play it. There are all these sympathetic strings on a sitar, so as I plucked one string the whole thing started to resonate. And I thought: "Oh my God!"

Sonically, all my learning was from listening to things and making my own interpretations of what I heard, but this was something else! Of course, later I got to meet Ravi Shankar at a concert in London – my friend and I were the only two young people there – and he gave me the tuning for the sitar.



Session men: Jimmy at Decca No.2 Studio with drummer Bobby Graham.

Of course, as far as the 1960s went, your work with The Yardbirds and Led Zeppelin is just the tip of the iceberg. Presumably you could ▷

ALAMY x2; BOTTOM: © JIMMY PAGE ARCHIVE 2019

Led Zeppelin at Earls Court, London, May 1975.

“The aesthetic was: ‘If Byron played guitar, or Shelley or Keats, what would they have worn?’ It was that sort of crazy logic.”

have subsisted very comfortably on session and production work alone, whether you’d joined a band or not?
Yeah, but when I’m in the Yardbirds I’m still having to do sessions at that time. For example, I did the Joe Cocker *With A Little Help From My Friends* album [recorded early 1968 and released in 1969]. But once it gets to the point of Led Zeppelin and I know what I want to do as far as production goes, I don’t do any more sessions. And I don’t want to do any more productions for anybody else. What I want to do is have everything that I can possibly bring to the party totally in-house.

You played on a succession of historic sessions with everyone from Tom Jones through The Who, the Rolling Stones and Cliff Richard to David Bowie. What was the most valuable lesson you learned during that period?
Whenever I listened to recordings, whether they be classical or electronic, Little Richard or Howlin’ Wolf or Johnny Burnette, I’d always been interested in listening to the ambience of the room and how people would record. So I would listen to Les Paul and get a real master class in how things are done there.

I’d done home recordings, but after a while, once I got into the studio, I could talk to the engineers in between sessions and ask: “How’s this done?” “How’s that done?” After a year or two, it eventually got to the point where I could play them records and ask: “How is that literally done?” I’d have my own idea of how it was done, but I would learn how it was done technically.

So, bit by bit, I was learning that aspect of it during what I would call my self-taught apprenticeship of being a studio musician. I learned the whole studio discipline of how quickly and efficiently you could do things and still be able to keep making things up on the spot, instantly. But I also learned how to record and produce sessions, and how *not* to record and produce things. So it really was a great apprenticeship.

With all that studio experience you’d picked up, might The Yardbirds have lasted longer with you in the production chair rather than [British pop producer] Mickie Most?
Well, look, Mickie Most was really, really good in his field. He knew how to do singles. We could list so many artists that he was really marvellous for. But when there was this break within The Yardbirds, he was given a package of Jeff Beck and The Yardbirds [Beck and the Yardbirds split in 1966, leaving Page as the group’s sole guitarist]. So he had two artists that he needed material for. He clearly saw Jeff on an instrumental path, which was right, but for The Yardbirds the singles started to grate. Up to this point, The Yardbirds had had such a wonderful catalog. When Jeff and I were in the band, we did *Happenings Ten Years Time Ago*, which was pretty cool. But when we did an album, it was really telling, because Mickie wasn’t interested in albums, he was only interested in doing singles.

So, bit by bit, we started to record tracks which we should never have done. The Yardbirds had done all of this magical stuff, and then to do things like *Ten Little Indians*, it was just absolutely wrong. I’m just really annoyed that they’re even out there. It was said that they wouldn’t be released, and they were. I don’t think that helped the spirit of the band. I did help put things together on the *Little Games* album, because Mickie wasn’t there a lot of the time, but I wasn’t officially in a production role.

LED ZEPPELIN
Led Zeppelin
II

In 1965, Rolling Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham asked you to produce a single with Nico. You bumped into her again later with The Velvet Underground. How profound an influence was hearing the Velvets?
I went to the Scene Club [in New York], which was decorated by Andy Warhol, and it was decorated with Bacofoil on the walls, because he said that was the colour of speed. And suddenly you hear this band doing this drone stuff, and Lou Reed’s writing was just out of this world. They were just phenomenal, and they sounded just like that first album. I only saw them when I was going through New York with The Yardbirds. Everyone talks about The Velvet Underground, but at the time people did not go to see them, and I found that odd. I loved The Velvet Underground, and it was such a thrill to have done that single with Nico, having written something with Andrew Oldham and going in there and just doing *The Last Mile*, which was really cool.

During The Yardbirds era and onward, you’re increasingly dressing like a rock star: your ex-Navy frock coat, your badge jacket… When did you first realise that clothes maketh the musician?
I was definitely dressing the part of how I was seeing things at the time. It’s almost like a new romantic before there’s new romantics. The aesthetic was: ‘If Byron played guitar, or Shelley or Keats, what would they have worn?’ It was that sort of crazy logic. But as far as the sort of clothes that I wore, when Robert [Plant] and I went to the cottage in Wales there was no electricity there. There was a log fire and a battery cassette recorder, and that was it. There was gas lighting. And the beards started to grow, and then it grew and grew, and it got to the point where it got rather unkempt. I thought, well, everybody is starting to look the same, with long hair and beards, right across the music scene. So I thought: “I’m going to go back to my more aesthetic look.”

And suddenly you’re ten years younger.
Yeah [laughs]. And the funny thing about a beard, when you actually shave it off you can go through all of these sort of incarnations: a D’Artagnan, sideboards, all the way back to clean-shaven. So off it came.

I expect you still try your vintage wardrobe on for size every now and again?
I can’t get the dragon suit trousers on. Or the poppy suit. The thing with those is that you can see where the button gets moved across, because doing three-hour sets in that, and it’s all a workout, five nights a week, you start losing whatever weight

GETTY

Stars in their eyes in 1968: John Paul Jones, John Bonham, Jimmy Page and Robert Plant.

"I can't get the dragon suit trousers on. Or the poppy suit."

you've gained at home, and the buttons get moved across. Looking at it, it's pretty scary.

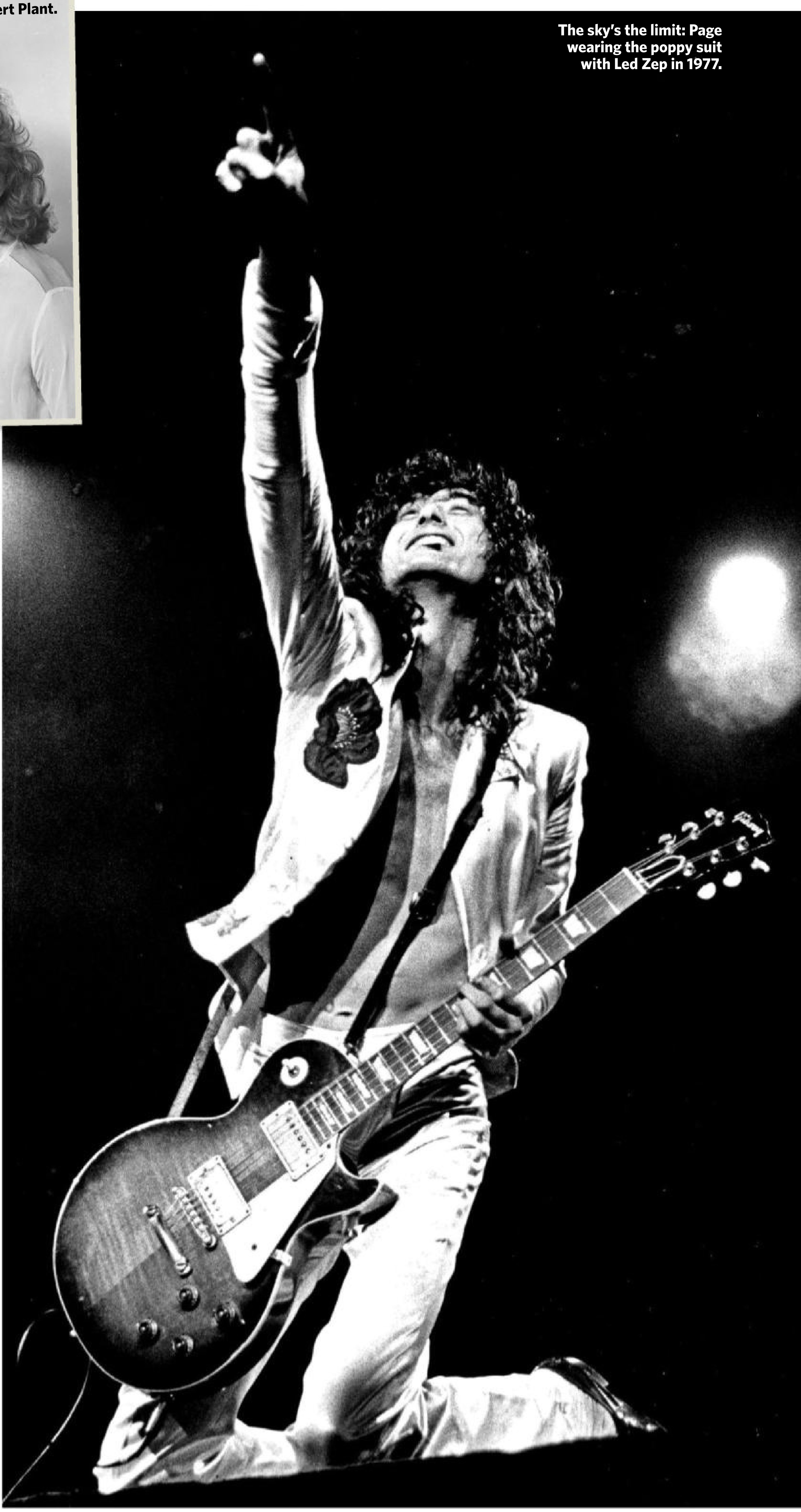
The more I listen to Led Zeppelin, the more I think that the heaviness of those recordings isn't about volume, but the richness of the guitar tones and the method of recording the drums, especially on the recordings made at Headley Grange. As the band's producer, what influenced you when you were mapping out the Zeppelin sound?

I would say the first album has got so many ideas in it, and you can hear that those ideas develop through the second album, the third album and all the rest of it. So it becomes a point where I've tried with *Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You,* with the power of John Bonham, to build the drama of the song. I was using the same aspect with things like *Ramble On,* with *What Is And What Should Never Be* and that sort of thing, where you have these choruses which are not really super-loud, but it's really the intensity that gives it the drive. So you can start playing with the dynamics of everything. I got this right from the early days of the first album. It seemed to be ahead of the game of what others were doing, and that's always good, because you're turning people on, musicians as well as the listening public.

In 1967 you worked with the Stones' Brian Jones on the *A Degree Of Murder* soundtrack, with its bowed guitar and The Mel-O-Bar. It seems Brian was a musician who was similarly open-minded to cross-cultural experimentation as you were.

Brian Jones was very special. I had this blues collector, Dave Williams, who lived down the road, which was where I first heard Howlin' Wolf and slide or bottleneck guitar, and he told me they'd break the end off of a bottle and use it. And I thought: "Oh Christ, I'm not going to cut my fingers off trying to do that."

Then I heard about this guy who played bottleneck guitar, and I went over to the Ealing Jazz Club. And lo and behold, Brian Jones got up and ▷



The sky's the limit: Page wearing the poppy suit with Led Zep in 1977.

MAIN: ALAMY; INSET: GETTY

Led Zeppelin climbing the *Stairway* at Madison Square Garden, New York, June 7, 1977.

GETTY

he had a jam, and it was like listening to Elmore James. I went to talk to Brian afterwards, and I said to him: "What are you using?" And he told me immediately, he said: "Have you got a car mechanics near you? Go and ask them for a bush. That's what this is. They'll bring you a variety of them." So I went down and asked, and there it was, the first slide steel for me to play. But this guy was so generous. He would tell you how things were done. Other people would keep their tricks to themselves, but he was very much like that, and he was somebody who was super eclectic.

> **"The first Zeppelin album has got so many ideas in it. You can hear that those ideas develop through all the rest of it."**

You'd been in the orbit of the Rolling Stones since the very beginning, and you became great friends with their piano player Ian Stewart. He recorded with The Yardbirds, and later with Led Zeppelin on *Rock And Roll* and *Boogie With Stu*. If you'd thought he'd have said yes would you have taken him on tour?
The thing is, he was in the Stones. He was the extra member. But Andrew [Oldham, Stones manager] didn't necessarily want him to be in the Stones. So what happened was, he was still in the Stones, but he was tour manager, and also playing on the records as well. Then Nicky Hopkins came along. But Stu was phenomenal. He was a master of the piano. He was so cool, and a lovely man. So would I have toured with him? Well, he was always with the Stones, but I did do a Rocket 88 thing with him. We played up in Northampton once, jammed up there with Rocket 88, and that was great.

Recording *Scarlet* with the Stones in 1974 [recently released with the *Goats Head Soup* reissue], did it occur to you that they might have been courting you to replace Mick Taylor?
No, because I thought Ronnie was probably a good contender. I know when we did *Presence* in Musicland [Studios, Munich] they followed us in. We'd done the whole of the *Presence* album, and I asked Mick if I could have an extra couple of days to finish, because we'd been in there for three weeks to do the whole darn thing and deliver it. And he graciously did that. I think at that time they were still thinking about who they were going to get to be their guitarist, because they were trying various guitarists there.

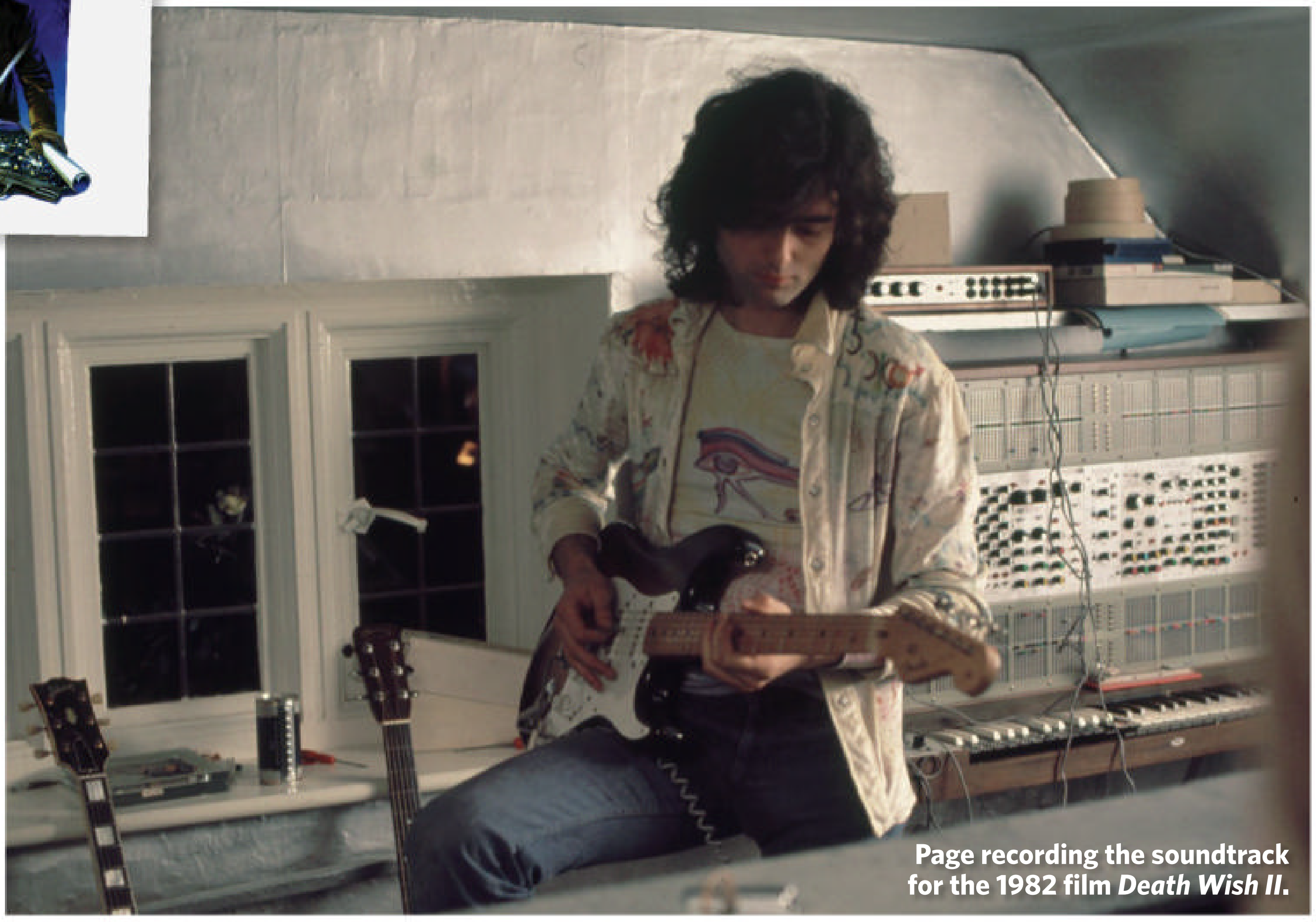
At that time I was firmly entrenched in Led Zeppelin, that's what it was, so I probably didn't come into the equation, really. But it was fun to do the *Scarlet* session. It was lovely to work with Keith, because we'd played together on some of the Chris Farlowe stuff – I think we're both on the *Out Of Time* record, and *Midnight Hour* – but this was really good to do something from scratch.

We did the session, and Stu was there that night, and the following day they were going to do a bit more stuff on it. Stu put the keyboards and organ on it, and I said: "I'll come along and put the guitar solos on it." And so the following night I went in on the early part of the session and put a couple of solos on, so it was great. It was a really nice memory, though I never thought it would come out.

One thing that says a lot about your character is how you dealt with the tendon injury you suffered in 1972. Psychologically, the pressure must have been huge. But physically, rather than let it beat you, you simply decided to modify your style to play with three fingers.
Yeah. That came as a nasty shock on the West Coast and whatever it was – let's say it was a tendon thing, because I never found out – when I pushed down on the ring finger of the left hand it sent like electric shocks up the arm. At the end of that leg of the tour – we were working from West Coast to East Coast – what was looming was the recording of the film *The Song Remains The Same*, so it was only over the course of a few concerts that we had before that, that I'm actually using all of the fingers again. So yeah, there were two tours where I had to muck about with trying to play with less fingers than you should. It was pretty tricky.

When John Bonham died, Zeppelin were about to begin rehearsals for an upcoming American tour. Obviously, the tour never took place. But what were your feelings leading up to those fateful rehearsals at Bray Studios? Would Led Zeppelin have continued to make albums, or were you already itching for fresh challenges?
John Bonham and I discussed what sort of shape the next album should be, because each album was different to the last. It just so happened that *Presence* was basically a guitar album, so as John Paul Jones had his Dream Machine [a Yamaha GX-1 synthesiser, used extensively on *In Through the Out Door*], it was only right to do a keyboard album. So we had been discussing what we'd do for the next one, and there were definite ideas of what we could do.

THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK • MUSIC BY JIMMY PAGE
DEATH WISH II


Page recording the soundtrack for the 1982 film *Death Wish II*.

> **"John Bonham and I discussed what sort of shape the next album should be, because each album was different to the last."**

In 1981, you, Chris Squire and Alan White teamed up as XYZ. The recording sessions seemed to bear significant fruit, yet the music remains unreleased. Do you have you any plans to return to the recordings any time soon?
It was the very first thing that I did after a break of not playing the guitar after losing John. I got the guitar from storage and started playing it again, and it was an instant connection. I had a studio, and because I'd been very friendly with Chris Squire, he said: "We've got some stuff. Let's come together and see what we can do." And he had this novel name: because there were two former members of Yes, he thought it should be XYZ, as in ex-Yes and Zeppelin. Which was a bit of fun.

They were such great musicians that it really did me a world of good. I had to be on exactly the same level as they were, so the level of concentration and commitment to it was really great. But what I don't know is what bits and pieces they brought to the party that may have ended up on Yes records. One that we did there as an instrumental eventually came out as *Fortune Hunter* with The Firm [Pages's band with former Free and Bad Company singer Paul Rodgers].

But those guys were just in a league of their own. So it's really good music. I haven't actually returned to it yet. I will, because I know how darn good it is, and then I suppose one would just have to speak to those that were involved, and families and stuff, and see whether it could come out one day. I hope it does. There is a cassette version of it that is terrible quality, and it's out there on the internet. Nevertheless, it's fascinating to listen to.

TOP: © JIMMY PAGE ARCHIVE 2019; BOTTOM: ROSS HALFIN

In *Anthology* you talk about going out on the ARMS tour of 1983 [a series of charity gigs in aid of Multiple Sclerosis research, with many big names involved], of your trepidation before going out on stage, but conclude by saying the tour was great fun "when I got over my nerves". Without Zeppelin at your back, was playing live a daunting prospect?
It was by the time I went to America, because at least the Albert Hall, where they had the initial concerts, was like an old friend. But when we went to America… We played in the Reunion Center in Dallas. I thought: "That's gonna be good", because we'd played it with Led Zeppelin. But when I went on there for the soundcheck it was absolutely huge, vast, and I got pretty nervous about it!

But I volunteered straight away when Stu asked me to do it for Ronnie Lane, because everybody who met Ronnie Lane loved him. It was leave your egos outside, so everybody just came together to do everything they could for this thing at the Royal Albert Hall. And I realised that everyone involved had solo careers. I didn't. I only had a career via The Yardbirds and Led Zeppelin, and I'd just done the *Death Wish* soundtrack, so I just did stuff from that. It's a bit odd, but it was really great to be out there and playing again.

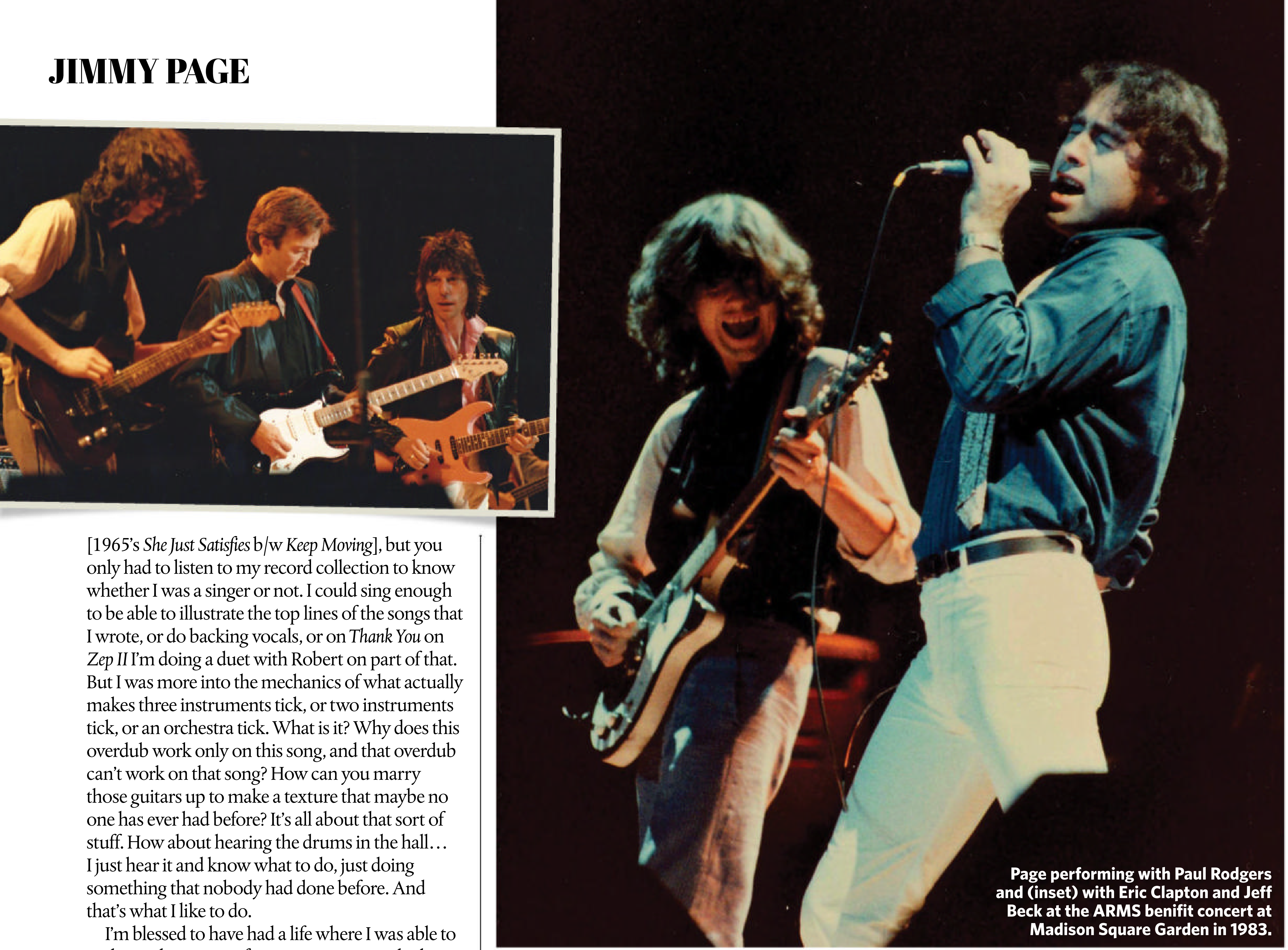
Then when we went to the States, Steve Winwood didn't want to go as he had some project that he was going to be doing in the UK. So I got hold of Paul Rodgers, because he's fantastic. He's such a master craftsman, he's wonderful. And we started writing stuff together. He was playing guitar as well as me and that was cool. We just had a great time with what we were doing, and then at the end of it I said: "What are you doing when you get back?" He said: "I'm not doing anything. What are you doing?" "Well, I'm not doing anything yet, but we could." And he said: "Yeah, let's do it." And that's how we did The Firm. It was a wonderful way to birth that creative partnership.

While putting The Firm together, prior to bringing in Chris Slade, you auditioned Rat Scabies as a potential drummer for the band. Many of your peers were unnerved by punk, but really it was just skiffle in a different guise. An entry point for young musicians.
Yeah. I heard The Damned at The Roxy Club in Covent Garden, I went down there with Robert. We went down there and stood at the back, and they sort of shambled on, but 'one-two-three-four' and then, my God, the intensity of it, that more or less pushed you back against the wall. And I loved that. They were phenomenal. I more recently saw them at The Palladium.

When I saw them the first time around, the Captain was on bass then, and Brian James on guitar, *New Rose* and all of that stuff. I thought it was amazing. For me it was like real hard-arsed rock. When I saw them at The Palladium it was phenomenal. I thought, bless your hearts, it's fantastic. Dave Vanian shaving his head during intermission and coming back on as Nosferatu? I mean, that's real devotion to your art. And he's such a good singer. It was one of those concerts where you say: "Gosh, I wish you could have seen that. That would have woken you up."

You worked in tandem with David Coverdale and later The Black Crowes, even your *Outrider* solo album was toured around a four-piece core unit. Do you enjoy the band dynamic, rather than placing yourself as a solo artist?
The thing is, I was always used to being in a three-piece. Going right back to Red E Lewis. It's a three-piece behind a singer. So that goes all the way through. Yardbirds is slightly different, like with Jeff [Beck], and that was great playing with Jeff. We've got this great stuff that we did together, but then it reverts back to the three-piece. What I wanted to do was to be able to make the one guitar take the place of two guitars, really.

Looking at this four-piece band dynamic that you prefer to fit into, could you – in another life – have been a singer in a band?
No, not really. I mean, I could sing, I did a single ⊳



Page performing with Paul Rodgers and (inset) with Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck at the ARMS benifit concert at Madison Square Garden in 1983.

"I realised that everyone involved [in the ARMS concerts] had solo careers. I didn't. I only had a career via The Yardbirds and Led Zeppelin."

[1965's *She Just Satisfies* b/w *Keep Moving*], but you only had to listen to my record collection to know whether I was a singer or not. I could sing enough to be able to illustrate the top lines of the songs that I wrote, or do backing vocals, or on *Thank You* on *Zep II* I'm doing a duet with Robert on part of that. But I was more into the mechanics of what actually makes three instruments tick, or two instruments tick, or an orchestra tick. What is it? Why does this overdub work only on this song, and that overdub can't work on that song? How can you marry those guitars up to make a texture that maybe no one has ever had before? It's all about that sort of stuff. How about hearing the drums in the hall… I just hear it and know what to do, just doing something that nobody had done before. And that's what I like to do.

I'm blessed to have had a life where I was able to make my living out of my passion. Not only that, but to have been able to have made some important musical statements in various genres, but also have made people happy along the way and inspired people in the way that I was inspired. And that passes on the baton.

Hooking back up with Robert Plant in 1994 for *Unledded* saw you working again with North African grooves, with Moroccan and Egyptian musicians.

When we were in the States with that, we had all these different textures. We had the western orchestra with the Egyptian overtones, with their string variants and quarter-tones and the percussion, so they had tonal elements that people hadn't heard. I remember saying to somebody after the concert: "The hurdy-gurdy solo was great tonight." They said: "What was that?" I said: "It was that bit before *Gallows Pole*," or whatever it was, and they said: "Oh, I thought that was an organ." So we were turning people on to sounds they hadn't heard.

JIMMY PAGE
OUTRIDER

Did you find a kindred spirit in engineer Steve Albini, with whom you worked on the Page & Plant follow-up *Walking Into Clarksdale?*

Yes. He's a guitarist, and I liked him very much. He was really good to work with. It was an interesting album that we did after all the bells and whistles that we had employed on the *Unledded* project. The whole writing process was fun, doing that with Robert. I think that the *Walking Into Clarksdale* album, fifty per cent of that is really, really, *really* good. I'm super-critical about stuff I listen back to, but I think there's some superb stuff on there… He's singing great, I'm playing well, the band's gelling and we've got some good ideas on it.

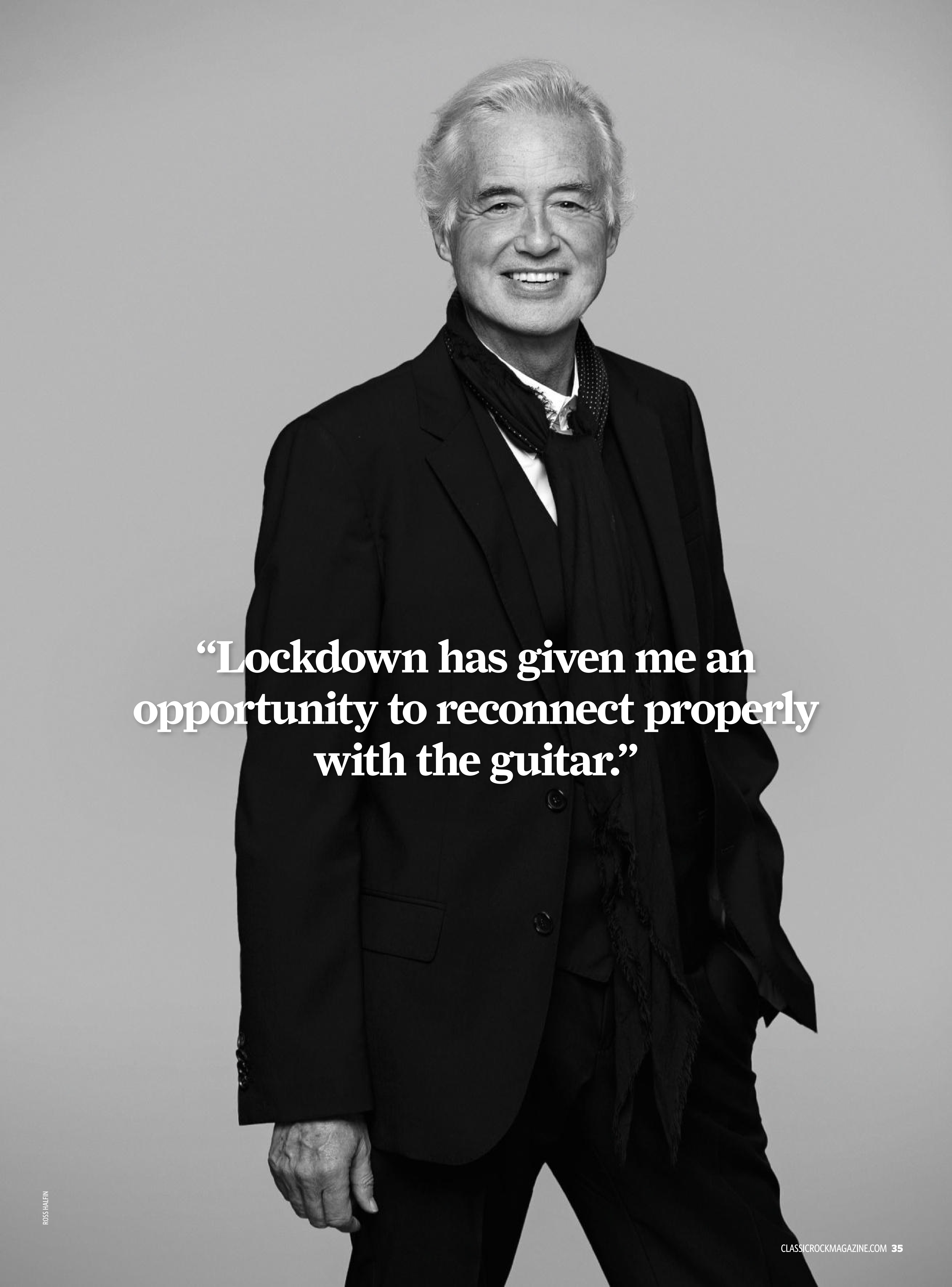
Led Zeppelin reunited in 2007 for the Ahmet Ertegun Tribute show at London's O2. In *Anthology* you reveal that you would like to have done two nights instead of just the one.

Initially there were going to be two nights, with us on one night, along with other Atlantic artists. The idea was that we would do a half-hour set. But I said: "I'm not rehearsing to do a half-hour set! We've got Live Aid to correct, and the Atlantic fortieth. [Led Zeppelin's reunion performance at the Philadelphia leg of Live Aid on July 13, 1985 was marred by a lack of rehearsals, Page's out-of-tune guitar and Plant's hoarse vocals. Their Atlantic 40th Anniversary performance on May 14, 1988 suffered from a disagreement between Page and Plant as they walked to the stage about performing *Stairway To Heaven*, and John Paul Jones's keyboards were missing from the live television feed.] I thought: "We're gonna go out there and stand proud," you know? So that means we've got to do a proper set. And that's what we did. So yeah, a second night would have been really, really good. In fact, the following day, I started to get really jittery at seven o'clock, and I thought, I know what it is, it's because I'd paced myself toward doing the O2, and now there isn't an O2 to do!

With Led Zeppelin being such an instinctively improvisational beast, I'd imagine that when it's roused into full wakefulness it's not easy to put it back to sleep.

I think that's true. We'd had a lot of fun up to that point in the rehearsals, because mainly it was the three of us. There'd be Jason [Bonham], John Paul Jones and myself playing together, so that Jason felt really part of the band, as opposed to like he's there because he's John's son. He was there because he was a damn good drummer, and it was right that he should be sitting in that seat. But he needed to know that. And yeah, a lot of rehearsals went into it. We were ready for it. It had been said that there was going to be a tour. There weren't any dates put in, but obviously we had honed ▷

ALAMY x2



“Lockdown has given me an opportunity to reconnect properly with the guitar.”

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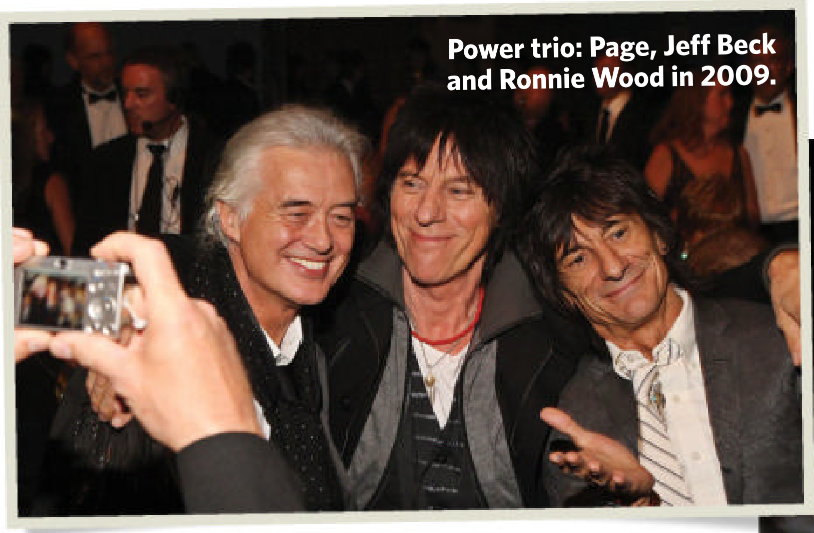

Power trio: Page, Jeff Beck and Ronnie Wood in 2009.

Page and Robert Plant at the Phildelphia Live Aid concert, July 13, 1985.

jimmy page robert plant
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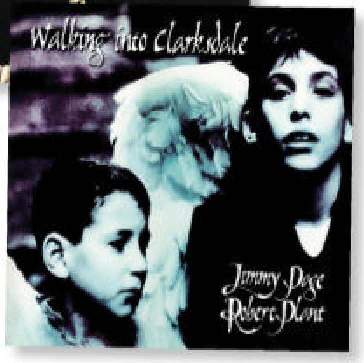

> **"If I ever went out again – and I'm not saying I would – I'd obviously do things from my past. I wouldn't be intimidated by it, not at all. No, I'd be inspired by it."**

ourselves to the point where we were ready. But then there has not been any discussion about any tour ever since – nor will there be. So there you go. It's just one of those weird, odd things in the world of Led Zeppelin, really, another part of the Led Zeppelin phenomenon.

You have an enormous reputation as a musician. Are you intimidated by your own reputation? Do you feel a tremendous amount of pressure to live up to your past?
[Long pause] Erm, no… No. No I don't. In the context of that, doing the *Outrider* tour [in 1988] that came after a few years of not doing anything, and I knew exactly what to do. So I did an album that pleased me as far as what I wanted to do, and what I wanted to go out as the current statement. I had the beauty of having John Miles, who was phenomenal, because he could sing the Chris Farlowe parts, he could sing the Robert Plant parts, he could sing the Paul Rodgers parts and he could sing the John Miles parts, so what did I do? And if I ever went out again – and I'm not saying that I ever would – but if I did I would obviously do things from my past. Each aspect is all part of my musical growth, of what I've done, of what I've managed to pioneer or achieve. I wouldn't be intimidated by it, not at all. No, I'd be inspired by it… There's a good one for you.

Pausing for thought, and looking back at your life while researching *Anthology*, did you discover that you harboured any regrets?
Regrets can grow into resentments, can't they? And I try not to hold resentments. Processing them makes life more like a load. The thing about life is that it isn't all wine and roses. Well it certainly isn't wine for me any more [Page has been sober for a number of years], it's a rocky road and a topographical landscape that's sometimes difficult to navigate. Sometimes things don't go quite the way you wished they would. So what do you have to do? You have to rethink it. You think of ways around things. And the thing that I have found is that if you come up against an obstacle, then I can think of numerous ways of getting around it. And whether that's musically or not, I think it's good to be able to think in a more positive way than a negative way.

So what is it like being Jimmy Page in 2020, an era when you can't walk outside your front door without someone waving their phone at you?
If you're connected to media in any shape or form, nobody can go anywhere without somebody running up for a selfie. If you did that to people in any other walk of life during the course of their normal day you'd most probably be arrested. So it can be a bit tiresome. It depends on people's attitude when they come up to you, but I'm polite to people so people are usually polite to me. But you run the gauntlet, that's for sure. But at least I'm not one of these Hollywood A-list stars. They're pretty much in lockdown all the time.

What's next? Are you working on any projects at present?
One of the things I was complaining about before we all had to lock down was that I wasn't having enough time to play guitar. I was able to actually say: "Well, this is it. You can do it every day now." So it's given me an opportunity to reconnect properly with the guitar.

Anything solid you can tell us about, the ideas you're playing with?
No, not really, but obviously I'm never not doing something, and I'm never not doing something that's going to surprise people. It's like when I did a spoken-word project with my girlfriend [2019's *Catalyst*, with poet Scarlett Sabet]. Nobody was expecting me to do that, because nobody had done that before. It was really wonderful to do. But I've always got ideas, and the day that I wake up and haven't got any ideas of what to do and how to do it, that for me will be a very sad day. And that day looks like it's some way off yet.

Ronnie Wood once told me that every time he bumps into Jeff Beck, Jeff takes him aside and shows him something that he's only just discovered he can do. Do you still pick up a guitar of an evening and surprise yourself?
If I play the guitar, I don't practise scales and things like that, and I never ever did. But if I'm playing, before I even know where I am it's shifting into something that I haven't played before, and that's it. That's another one of the things that I don't want to wake up and not do. It's pretty mantric, and almost trance-like, but that's what happens. And that takes us right back to all the *Dazed And Confused* stuff. But that's how it goes, though probably not quite as fluently as those days, but nevertheless that thing is still there.

So yeah, I can come up with new stuff, and I do, and I make notes of what I do, and why not?

Deep down, are you still that enthusiastic young lad who's curious to unlock every new possibility that lies within your guitar?
No. But I'm his great-grandfather.

Jimmy Page: The Anthology, by Jimmy Page, is published by Genesis Publications. Order from jimmypageanthology.com

TOP LEFT: GETTY; TOP RIGHT: CAMERA PRESS / ROBERT MATHEU; BOTTOM: ROSS HALFIN

The Church of ROCK'N'ROLL

For **Low Cut Connie** mainman Adam Weiner, music is not something he just wants to do, he says, it's his religious calling. And what he delivers suggests that maybe the devil doesn't have all the best tunes after all.

Words: **Polly Glass**

As it is with so many fireballs of rock'n'roll (Prince, Little Richard, Jimi Hendrix, Alice Cooper, Kurt Cobain, Angus Young…), to meet Adam Weiner off stage is to meet a different person from the Adam Weiner on stage. He's polite and earnest. He's approachable but keeps largely to himself. He doesn't drink. He doesn't shout or make a scene. But put him on stage, or in front of a camera, and it's a different story.

Every week since March this year, Low Cut Connie's piano-thumping mastermind has been singing, playing, gesticulating, sermonising and sweating profusely for an audience he can't see. Often he's stripped to his underwear by the end, writhing on the floor of his Philadelphia apartment like a man possessed. It's like watching an evangelical church service led by the pale Jewish love child of Little Richard and Tina Turner.

> **"I've bombed more times than I've killed. I had to go through that to become the performer I wanted to be."**
>
> **Adam Weiner**

Welcome to *Tough Cookies,* Low Cut Connie's lockdown live-stream operation. A warm, noisy cabaret of glitz, grit and good times, it's an exaggerated montage of all that Weiner and his band, an ever-changing cast, have cultivated since 2010. It's raucous rock'n'roll that begs to be danced to; Jerry Lee Lewis-rivalling piano boogies; affectionate tales of underdogs and misfits (peaking on their previous two albums *Dirty Pictures Part 1* and *Part 2*)… all of which entered the global spotlight in 2015, when then-US president Barack Obama included their song *Boozophilia* on his summer Spotify playlist.

Over the past six months, with the band's usual touring on ice due to covid, *Tough Cookies* has grown substantially. As Weiner tells us, it's become more than just a stopgap.

"It's very quaint to think that everybody was thinking: 'I can't take this shit no more, ten days!'" he says with a grin. "Now it's five and a half months. But at that point [when they did the first live stream] people were saying: 'Can you please do something online? Just *something?*' So we announced that we would do three performances. We had no plan whatsoever; me and Will [Donnelly, Low Cut Connie guitarist and the only other constant band member besides Weiner] would just do whatever we felt."

For the second *Tough Cookies* show the *Washington Post* sent a photographer over to the flat, where Weiner and Donnelly have carried out all their streamed shows, which have included Zoom interviews with guests such as Chuck Prophet and Dion.

"It's over forty hours of this shit," Weiner says, laughing, "And I've realised that I can do anything I want on these shows. I can do comedy, I can strip, I can sing, I can dance, I can talk politics, I can grieve with people. We laugh, we cry, I can give them inspirational messages, I can lead them in aerobics. Two weeks ago I did horoscopes. The other night we did an after-party broadcast and I sat there eating chicken tacos while people asked me questions. People are so hungry for live entertainment, making them feel in the moment."

The best thing about the format, he suggests, is how democratic it is. Nurses have streamed *Tough Cookies* in intensive-care units. OAPs, young adults and children

CHRIS WOOD/PRESS

are among their viewers. People have tuned in from more than 40 countries. It's an optimistic outlook, even if he does miss the face-to-face physicality of touring.

"I've got messages from people in Japan and Australia who get up at six a.m. to watch live," he enthuses. "We have a lot of viewers in South America, we have a fair number across Eastern Europe, I've got messages from people in the Middle East… I mean, when's the next time I'm gonna get to tour Lebanon or Ecuador?"

In the midst of all this, Weiner has been doing promo for the new Low Cut Connie album, *Private Lives*, a sprawling collection of soul, sleaze and rock'n'roll spanning 17 tracks. Sometimes joyful, often heartbreaking, laced with acerbic wit, it took more than two years to record. Sessions were packed into pockets of breathing space in an intense touring schedule, in multiple studios across America, involving more than 30 guest musicians. And it almost killed its creator.

Having already wrestled with depression for a number of years, Weiner found himself at an ominous low point after a new course of medication went badly wrong. He was diagnosed with serotonin syndrome, and plunged into a long, tortuous episode that would stretch from 2018 until the autumn of 2019.

"I became… fairly catatonic," he explains. "I had a lot of difficulty getting dressed and taking a shower and making the gig. But actually the performance itself would bring me clarity again. I think the adrenaline would sort of bring me back to my normal brain. I was doing a festival in England, and afterwards I got lost, cos I went through the crowd and I was hugging people, and the next thing I knew I was in the woods and I was completely lost and disorientated. I jumped over a fence and I landed funky and destroyed my left ankle. It's well over a year later and I'm still rehabbing my ankle."

He was also dealing with a torn rotator cuff (muscles and tendons around the shoulder) from earlier, plus a back injury from all the years of heaving pianos around. It's left him with a joint disorder which he still does yoga for every day.

In the end, curiously it was touring with a hip-hop artist, New Orleans 'bounce'/twerking pioneer Big Freedia, that brought him back from the brink.

"It was pure live entertainment," he recalls of the tour. "We had dancers, we had twerking, we brought the audience on stage, it was sexy, it was very soulful, we did some gospel. And all over the United States we had black, we had white, we had gay, we had straight, old, young, we had such a diverse group of people in the same room."

It was just the life-affirming boost Weiner needed in order to feel like himself again, and to complete the album.

"After the tour was over we got *Private Lives* finished," he says. "It wasn't until then – two years-plus into making it – that I said: 'This is a powerful album.' It's a mess, but it's a beautiful mess."

The real roots of *Private Lives* – and of Low Cut Connie – go back much further. Born in 1980, Weiner grew up in a strict conservative Jewish household in New Jersey. Ideology and practises were "old-school", with women separated from men for various elements. Synagogue services were very formal and almost entirely in Hebrew.

"I'm not in it for money, I'm not in it for sex, I'm not in it for drugs, I'm not in it for glory. I see this as a higher calling."

Adam Weiner

The religion itself hasn't stuck with Weiner, but the heady, old-world voices of cantorial singers laid foundations for his whole vocal delivery style. Not that he realised it at the time.

"Some of these cantors were Holocaust survivors," he recalls. "Some of them were from Lithuania or Poland and they had this amazing, old-world way of singing – I call it 'Jew soul'. That was very influential on me. When I came of age I realised that I was fairly atheistic in terms of religious faith, but [later] I reconnected with my Jewish upbringing in my adulthood and through my performances… I have seen spiritual resonance and spiritual uplift through live performance and music that is certainly what I would call religious."

He took piano lessons because the family had a piano at home and "that's what you did". Early years involved doggedly learning Broadway tunes and Barry Manilow hits. But it was the sight of Buddy Holly and The Big Bopper, alongside 1950s rock'n'roll stars such as Little Richard, in the 1987 rock'n'roll biopic *La Bamba* that captured Weiner's imagination at a young age.

In school he was a shy boy who was "terribly bullied" ("having the last name Weiner – A. Weiner – was not a help to the situation," he says with a wry smile) and struggled to talk to people. On stage, however, he found that something clicked.

"Being on stage was completely carefree for me," he says. "I remember being in eleventh or twelfth grade, and they did a Battle Of The Bands. I was in some shitty band, but I remember in the middle of

Music with a kick: Low Cut Connie's Adam Weiner (right) and Will Donnelly.

EMAD HASSAN/PRESS

the performance I said: 'If you scream loud enough I'll take my shirt off.' And everybody screamed, and I took my shirt off. And everybody was like, where the hell did this guy come from?!'"

All the while, a fearsome work ethic was being instilled in him. His father worked long hours in the fabric trade in New York City, and by the time Adam had his license he was driving him to the bus station at 4.30am. "Then he would get home at, like, nine o'clock at night," he says. "And he did that for twenty-seven years. I always had it instilled in me that you get up and you put in a shift, and whatever you're working towards you give it a hundred and twenty-five per cent."

At 18 he moved to the city to study at NYU, and began years of dues-paying as a pianist in restaurants, gay bars, jazz clubs, cabarets, wherever he could get a gig. He spent one year of his studies in Memphis, working at a local radio station and immersing himself in the music of the south.

"I would travel into Mississippi and go to the grave sites of blues artists that I loved," he says. "I would visit different juke joints and honky-tonks to see blues, soul music, country music. I went to Louisiana on many trips and would perform and meet people in rural Louisiana, New Orleans…"

During this time he went to Reverend Al Green's church in Memphis, where Green (a soul singer who'd had UK hits in the 70s and 80s) was still a pastor. Weiner was the only white person present, and the experience would resonate throughout his subsequent years of performing.

"I cried my eyes out, we had our arms around each other," he remembers. "Holding hands with everybody around me was very powerful. I would go to churches and listen to gospel music, which I still listen to. Even though it's not a theology for me, the spirituality of music moves me greatly."

After graduating he was based in New York for 13 years, and also spent two years in Montreal, one in Austin, and had a spell where he was touring so much that he "didn't really live anywhere". In 2005 he met his wife, Adriana, at which point he was playing piano at a Connecticut ballet studio by day and a gay bar by night.

Asked what other jobs he's had besides playing piano, he lets out a laugh and says: "Are you ready?! Oh shit, okay…" He then spends the next few ▷

Let me entertain you: Adam Weiner is nothing if not driven.

minutes outlining an enormous, oddball cv that includes jobs in vintage clothing stores and a doctor's office, as a 'fragrance model' ("the person who stands in the shopping mall and tries to spritz you with Chanel"), a children's theatre director, an English and French tutor, a telemarketer, a hospital file clerk and a cabaret director. After 9/11 he worked for a foundation running stress workshops for pre-school children in The Bronx.

"I met all of these families in very, very poor areas of The Bronx and Washington Heights and NYC, mostly black and Puerto Rican families, Dominican families. I got to know the teachers, the parents and the kids, and I would spend my days talking about stress with them. I was not qualified for the job, but I certainly loved the opportunity to do it."

But it's his first regular piano job, at a New York drag karaoke joint called Pegasus, that has really stayed with him. "I worked there in 2001, 2002. I was twenty-one, I was just finally allowed to work in a bar like that. I played there a couple of nights a week. The people I met there were outrageous. They were soulful. They were hysterical."

It was here, in an underground world of drag stars and colourful characters, that Weiner began to hear stories. Bizarre stories, amazing stories, sad stories, joyful stories. Myriad windows into a plethora of private lives. All of it alongside valuable lessons in how to entertain people – and how not to.

"I would bomb on some nights and kill on other nights," he says with a grin. "I learned that you have to look good, you have to not be boring, you have to sound good and you have to remember that you're not giving a concert, you're there to entertain people. There's a difference. It's not a piano recital, you're there to make people dance, make people laugh, cry, smile…"

He has many more stories like that. Such as the Italian restaurant in Queens frequented by the Mob ("they were really good tippers!"). The pot-luck dinner at a college in Norman, Oklahoma that turned out to be an anarchist squat. Countless "fascinating" people met in diners, motels and petrol stations across America. The nine-week shoestring solo tour of the UK and Europe (at the time Weiner was performing as 'Ladyfingers'), armed with a backpack, a guitar and a wooden box that he'd stand and stomp his foot on. Jet-lagged shows at "the shittiest places" in Northampton, Berlin and beyond – usually without a bed for the night and generally operating at a very "punky" level – toughened him up ruthlessly.

"I have a lot of friends here in Philly who are boxers," he says, by way of an analogy. "The real training to be a professional boxer, besides the fact that you have to do dozens and dozens of fights, is you have to get your ass kicked. You have to get beaten up over and over until you learn *not* to get beaten up. I've bombed. I've bombed more times than I've killed. I had to go through that to become the performer I wanted to be."

"I reconnected with my Jewish upbringing in my adulthood and… I have seen spiritual uplift through live performance and music."

Adam Weiner

Come the summer of 2015, Low Cut Connie had been going for five years, released three albums and made minimal headway, and Weiner is debating whether or not they should continue.

Then Barack Obama, the US president, publishes his summer Spotify playlist. It includes tracks by Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, the Isley Brothers… and Low Cut Connie. It was a turning point. While presidential approval didn't generate the fame and fortune it might have done in bygone decades, it did put Weiner in a position, finally, to make the band his full-time job.

"You have to remember," he says, "I did this in a completely unsuccessful way for ten to fifteen years before I saw any success. And because I saw it as a higher calling, I continued to do it."

It's precisely because of those years that he relishes *all* aspects of band life, even in today's odd times. The *Tough Cookies* live streams, the promo schedule, the shows, the social media, the fan interaction, the work…

"It's a privilege," he says, with the sort of unfussy sincerity that prevents you from rolling your eyes. "I'm not in it for money, I'm not in it for sex, I'm not in it for drugs, I'm not in it for glory. I see this as a higher calling. It's something that chose me, and I really can't do anything else. I don't take it lightly. I want to go further. I feel very lucky."

Private Lives is out on October 13 via Contender Records/MidCitizen Records.

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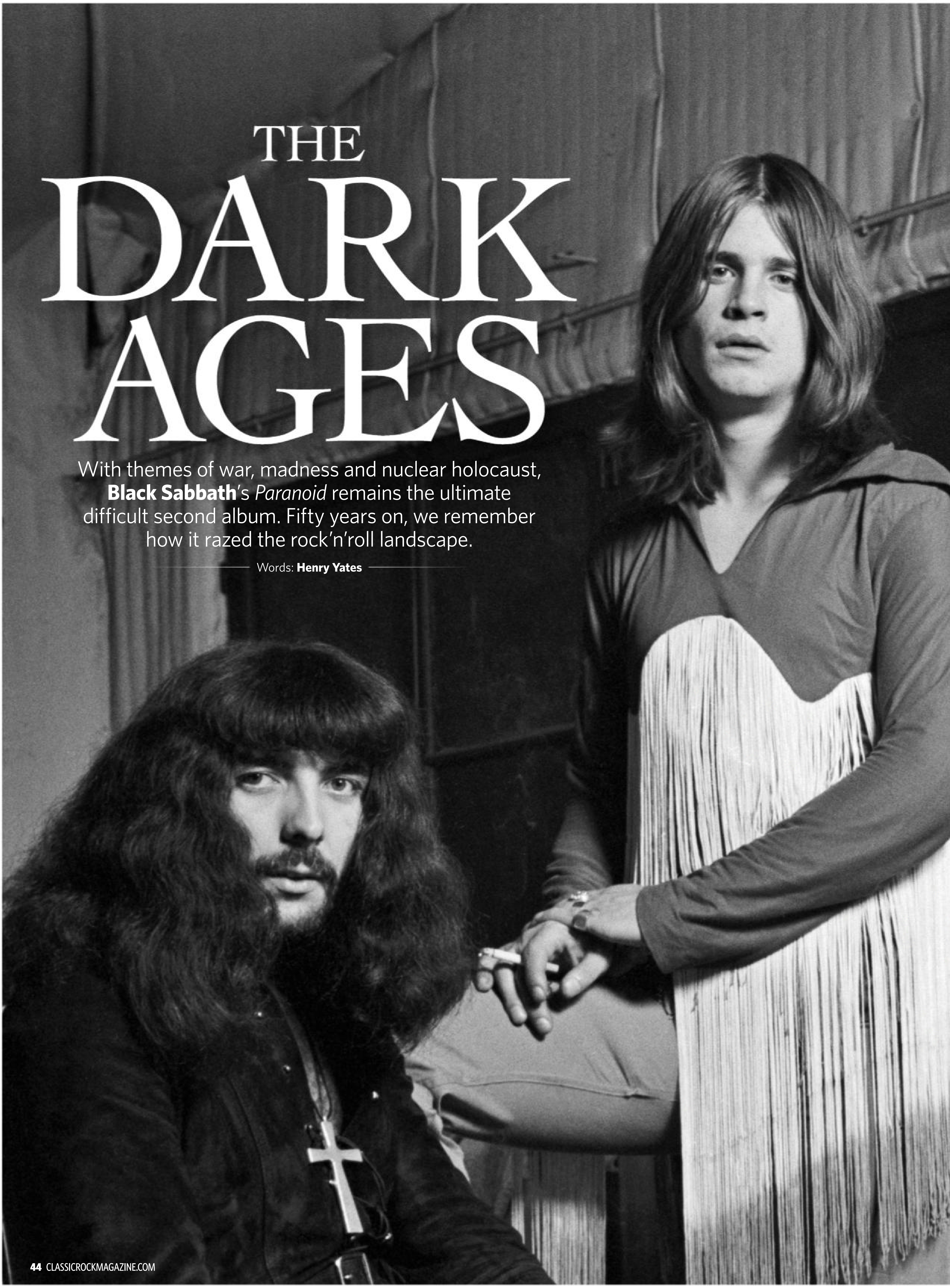

THE DARK AGES

With themes of war, madness and nuclear holocaust, **Black Sabbath**'s *Paranoid* remains the ultimate difficult second album. Fifty years on, we remember how it razed the rock'n'roll landscape.

Words: **Henry Yates**

TONY FRANK / GETTY

Paranoid sessions at Regents Sound studios in London, June 17 1970.

> **"I went to the love-ins at Woburn Abbey, with kaftan, beads, and flowers in my hair. But by the time we wrote the *Paranoid* album reality had set in."**
>
> **Geezer Butler**

Summer 1970, and paranoia is in the air. In less than a year, Woodstock's vision of a kinder society has turned to ashes. The carnations placed in rifle barrels by Vietnam protesters have not slowed the shipment of body bags. The Cold War's adversaries edge closer to their nuclear buttons. Meanwhile, amid the craters, rubble and roaming gangs of Birmingham's Blitz-scarred Aston, the members of Black Sabbath are feeling the spirit of the age.

"I was scared stiff that we'd be dragged into Vietnam, and World War Three seemed a very real event," Sabbath's bassist and lyricist Geezer Butler says, a half-century later. "I was really into flower power in the sixties. I went to the love-ins at Woburn Abbey in sixty-seven and sixty-eight, with kaftan, beads, and flowers in my hair. But by the time we wrote the *Paranoid* album reality had set in. A lot of my lyrics were my disappointment that the love era was just a pipe dream. The love-ins and protests were all in vain."

Sabbath had already put a little distance between themselves and reality. Despite the best efforts of a snide rock press and an apathetic record industry, the band's self-titled debut album had been a transatlantic success, reaching No.8 in the UK and No.23 in the US. But with media daggers drawn and the threat of conscription on the cards – or, even worse, a return to the abattoirs and welding factories they'd just escaped – Butler, guitarist Tony Iommi, drummer Bill Ward and singer Ozzy Osbourne were still running as hard as they could.

BLACK SABBATH
PARANOID

The genesis of the material that hardened into Sabbath's thundering second album, *Paranoid*, is a slippery subject. Ward believes that some songs date back to '68. Osbourne talks of reel-to-reel tape recorders spinning for hours at marathon jam sessions, hoovering up countless wisps of gold. Butler recalls the debut album's live show-stopper, *Warning*, bleeding into *War Pigs* at thinly attended early shows. "There would be about three people in the audience," Iommi told *Rolling Stone*. "So we'd just make things up."

Origins, perhaps, were less important than originality. "The first album was signed on the strength of *Evil Woman*, a cover song, and *Warning* was a cover song as well," says Butler. "Success gave us confidence in our writing. It meant we could go ahead and write all original material for *Paranoid*. The critics were brutal on our first album, so when it was successful it showed they were way out of touch with what was happening. With *Paranoid*, we only had ourselves to please. If we liked the songs, that was all we needed."

Working the live circuit across Europe, while snatching days for writing sessions, the band finally came to rest at Rockfield Studios in Wales, where pre-production with trusted producer Rodger Bain literally blew the roof off.

"There was an old barn where we set up," Butler recalls, "but when we started playing, part of the roof fell in because of the volume. We were four kids from Aston, just glad to be living our dream. We still lived in Brum with our parents at the time, so any chance to travel out of the inner city, we gladly took. It was sort of a paid holiday for us – we were very close, us against the world sort of thing. We loved having a laugh, getting stoned and drunk together."

Archive shots of Sabbath larking with air rifles on the riverbank suggest a *Boy's Own* adventure, yet Rockfield's rural idyll was far from the dystopian tracklisting now taking form. These were songs that found the band with one eye on darkening global politics, another examining their own mental states, with a healthy stir of sci-fi and the occult. As Iommi told music paper *Disc & Music Echo*: "We write about what's happening in the world. We prick consciences."

Fascinatingly, the just-released *Paranoid Super Deluxe* box set includes an unreleased performance

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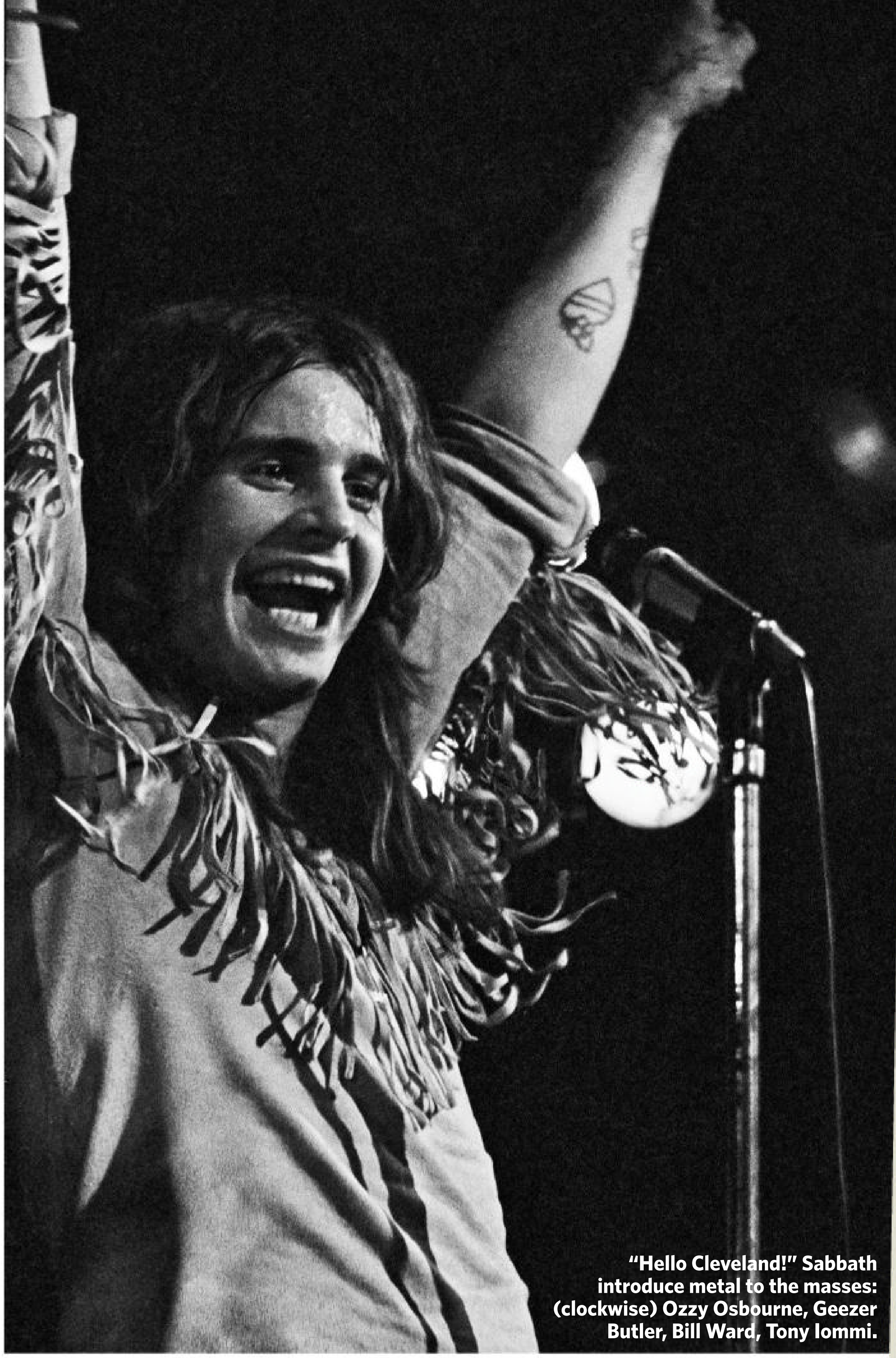

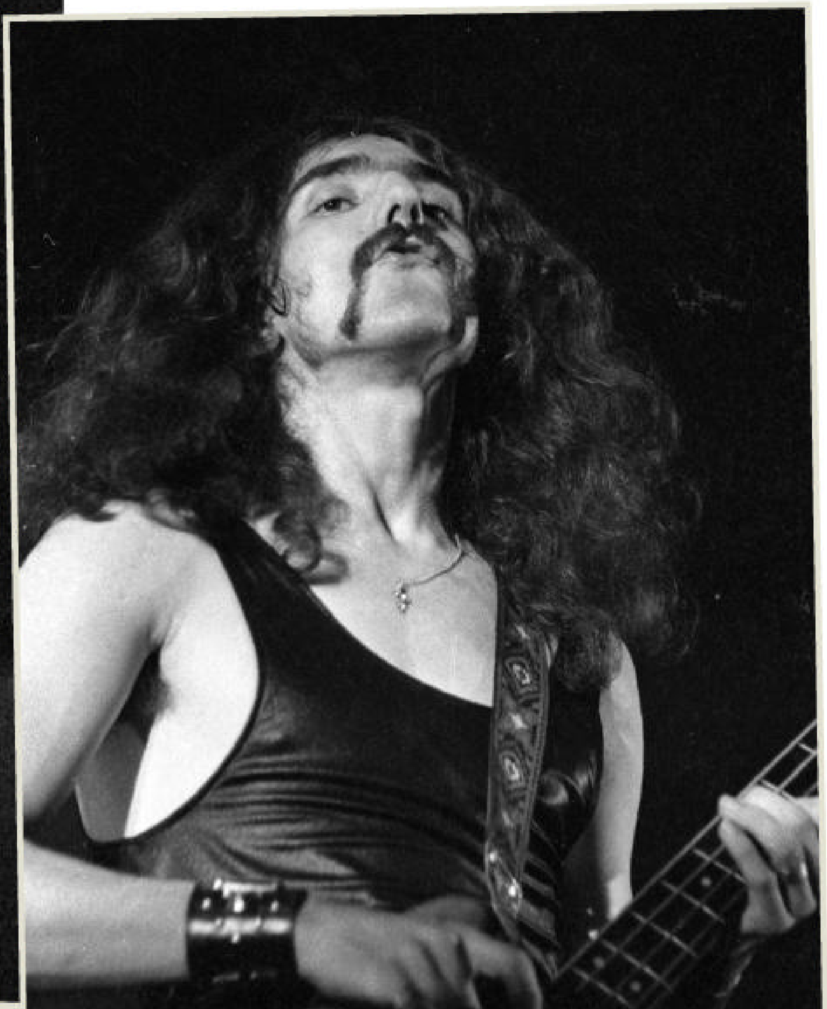

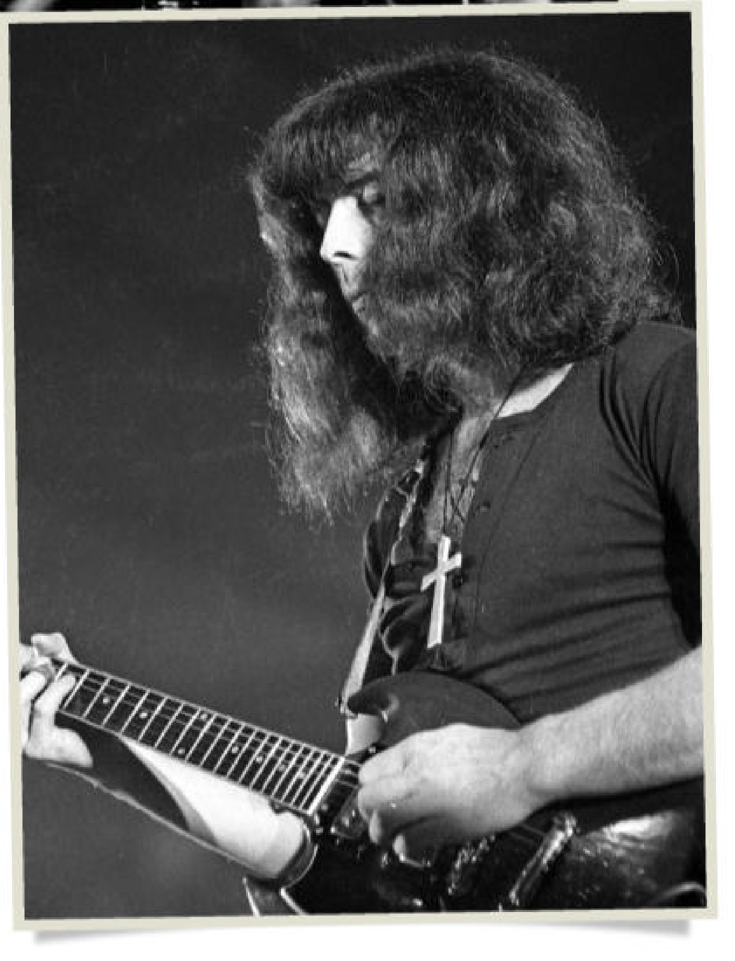

"Hello Cleveland!" Sabbath introduce metal to the masses: (clockwise) Ozzy Osbourne, Geezer Butler, Bill Ward, Tony Iommi.

> **"There was an old barn where we set up, but when we started playing, part of the roof fell in because of the volume."**
>
> **Geezer Butler**

from Montreux, showing how album opener *War Pigs* might have sounded had it continued with its original title of *Walpurgis* and Butler's witchy lyric ('*On the hill the church in ruin, is the scene of evil doings/It's a place for all bad sinners, watch them eating dead rats' innards*'). In its final form, the song was less schlocky, more thoughtful, with Butler's second draft attacking the capitalist war machine that sent soldiers to the meat grinder and enriched the politicos, with Iommi stabbing a brutal riff after each line.

While *War Pigs* put the stench of burning bodies into listeners' nostrils, *Hand Of Doom*'s bleakly groovy jazz-rock explored battle's fallout, drawing on the band's experiences of playing US military bases in England, where soldiers numbed their post-traumatic stress disorder with narcotics.

"*Hand Of Doom* was about people on drugs and what happens to them, their skin turning green and things," Osbourne told *NME*. "There's a lot of gory words, but we've seen a lot of people like that and it's getting out of all proportion. If you can frighten people with words, it's better than letting them find out by trying drugs. [But] I'm not trying to say that we're angels."

Electric Funeral repeated *Hand Of Doom*'s tempo trick of kicking from a funereal trudge into fifth gear, this time with Iommi working a wah-wah pedal while Osbourne caterwauled about a nuclear holocaust that *'turns people into clay/Radiation minds decay*'. Positively hippie-ish by comparison, Butler believes the woozy swoon of the "interplanetary love song" *Planet Caravan* was the result of a heavy session on the band's preferred black Afghani hash.

But any sniff of benevolence was snuffed out by the closing *Fairies Wear Boots*, a nod to the night when skinheads hijacked a gig in Weston-super-Mare and got more than they bargained for. ▷

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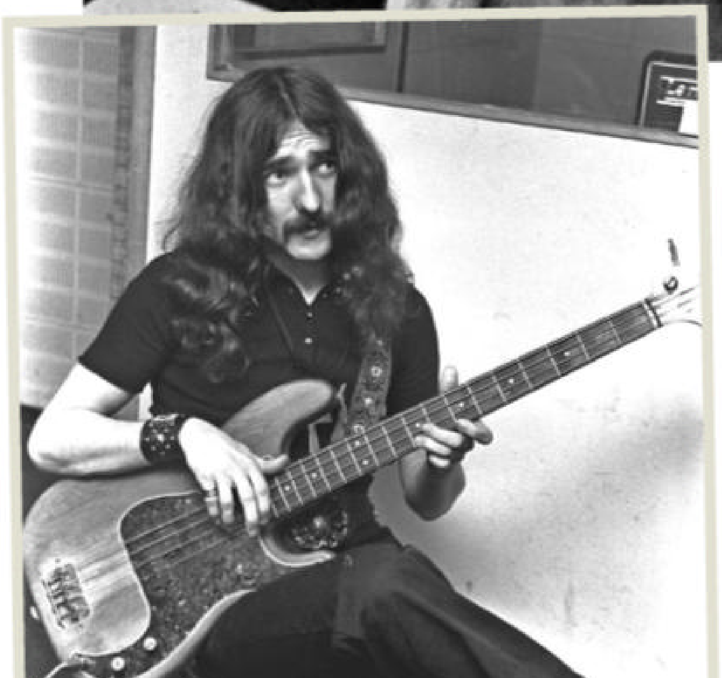


"One grabbed Ozzy around the neck and didn't realise he had a hammer," Iommi recalled. "He threw the hammer back and hit the claw in the guy's face. It was quite gruesome."

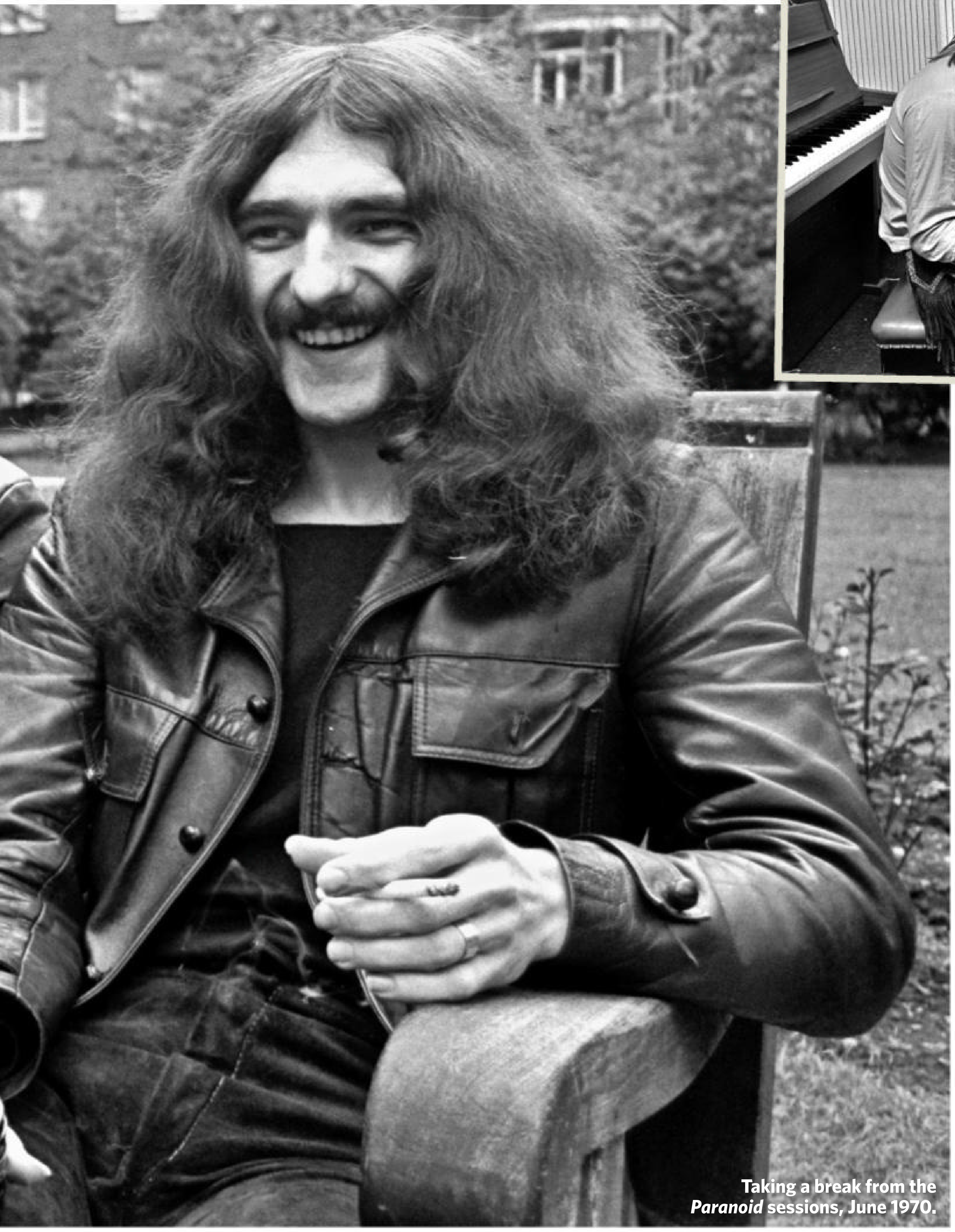
When it came to recording at London's Regent Sound and Island Studios, from June 16, 1970, Bain proved adept at stretching the basic four- and eight-track technology. Not every idea flew – Iommi recalls two wasted hours chanting "heigh-ho", from Disney's *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*. But by cloaking Osbourne's introductory vocal with a ring modulator effect, *Iron Man* truly sounded like the song's character: a steel soothsayer scorned for warning humanity of its bleak future. "*Iron Man* was the result of a jam," says Butler. "The song was based on the story of Jesus Christ – a hero at one point, then reviled a few months later."

Ward's *Rat Salad* was little more than a cut-and-shut of his live drum solos, and *Paranoid*'s talismanic title track didn't take much longer, spat out in the final moments of a five-day session, after Bain announced the album's running-time fell short. While Iommi's deathless riff was pure impulse, Butler didn't have to look far for his lyric about a man blighted by mental health: the bassist had taken to self-harming after doctors advised him to drink away his depression.

"I couldn't understand what was happening to me," he explains. "So I wrote the *Paranoid* lyrics to express what I was going through. I thought the song was too commercial-sounding compared to the rest of the album. Probably why I wrote the 'downer' lyrics. How wrong I was!"

Decades later Osbourne would complain that "I've never been on a stage without singing fucking *Paranoid*". Yet without the chain of events set in motion by the single reaching No.4 in the UK, Sabbath might never have ruled the 70s. To capitalise, the album title was swiftly changed from *War Pigs* to *Paranoid*, rendering the artwork nonsensical as well as ugly (Butler: "I hated the album sleeve").

While the press response to the album was reliably savage, *Paranoid* made it to No.12 in the US, selling more than four million copies there.



Taking a break from the *Paranoid* sessions, June 1970.

On home turf, Sabbath's ascent was even more striking, with *Paranoid* topping the UK album chart (their only record to do so until 2013's *13*), sending the band members on a triumphant drinking bender, not to mention a spending spree that saw them swanning around the Black Country in newly acquired Rolls-Royces. "It was brilliant," says Butler. "After all the criticisms and doubters, our fans showed who the most important people are. We were able to buy cars, move out of our parents' houses, have some money in the bank."

Paranoid's success came at a price, though. The band were bemused to find their shows infiltrated by teenyboppers who had bought the *Paranoid* single. "It happened a couple of weeks back at a gig in Portsmouth," Osbourne grumbled in *Disc & Music Echo* at the time. "We opened with *Paranoid* as usual, and suddenly the place went potty. There were kids rushing down the front, girls screaming and grabbing at us. We don't need fans like those, but we'll just have to grin and bear them and they'll go away."

More troubling were the misinterpretations of the album's intentions, with critics accusing the band of Satanism, advocating drugs and driving listeners to suicide (a situation exacerbated when a nurse killed herself with *Paranoid* spinning on her record player, even though the band were cleared of blame at an inquest).

"A lot of people have a grudge against us because of this black magic thing, but it's got out of all proportion," Ozzy told the *NME*. "I believe in black magic, but I haven't tried it and I won't."

> **"*Iron Man* was based on the story of Jesus Christ – a hero at one point, then reviled a few months later."**
>
> **Geezer Butler**

In the past, Butler has said that such smears "severely pissed me off", railing in particular against the mishearings of the final line of *Paranoid*'s, in which Osbourne tells listeners to *enjoy* – not *end* – their lives. Fifty years later, it seems, his conscience is clear.

"I didn't care how people interpreted the album. The only people I cared about were our true fans. The people who misinterpreted the band didn't even listen to us. Their interpretations were directly opposite of what the band was about."

Cast an eye across the rock'n'roll generations since 1970, however, and it's clear that all the people who matter were listening hard to *Paranoid*. The album is rightly considered a stone-cold cornerstone of metal, touching everyone from Van Halen (who almost named themselves Rat Salad) to Megadeth (who covered the title track) to Pantera (who, improbably, took *Planet Caravan* for a spin). As Rob Halford of Judas Priest points out in the Super Deluxe sleeve-notes: "*Paranoid* led the world into a new sound and scene." True, but the record's influence runs deeper and wider, too, cited by acts as disparate as Foo Fighters, Faith No More and The Replacements.

"*Paranoid* still stands up today," says Butler. "Because it was recorded 'raw'; there aren't any gimmicks or tricks that date the album. There wasn't much room for double-tracking and multiple takes… If we'd had longer in the studio, the songs would have suffered from over-production. I think most heavy bands of today cite *Paranoid* as a major influence. *Iron Man* is a fun riff to learn when you get your first guitar. At my granddaughter's school in California it's a staple in their music class – her teacher didn't believe her when she said her grandpa was in Black Sabbath."

Running parallel with that acclaim, of course, is the tragedy that *Paranoid* remains as grimly relevant as ever. War, mental health, the risk of a beating from far-right skinheads… The subjects explored across the album's eight tracks are both of their time and eternally prescient, chiming with any given zeitgeist.

"Substitute any Vietnam reference with any current war and the lyrics still stand up," Butler concludes "Mental health issues are finally being talked about in the media. *Electric Funeral* still applies as far as pollution and the destruction of Mother Earth is concerned. I think the lyrics to *Paranoid* are timeless." ●

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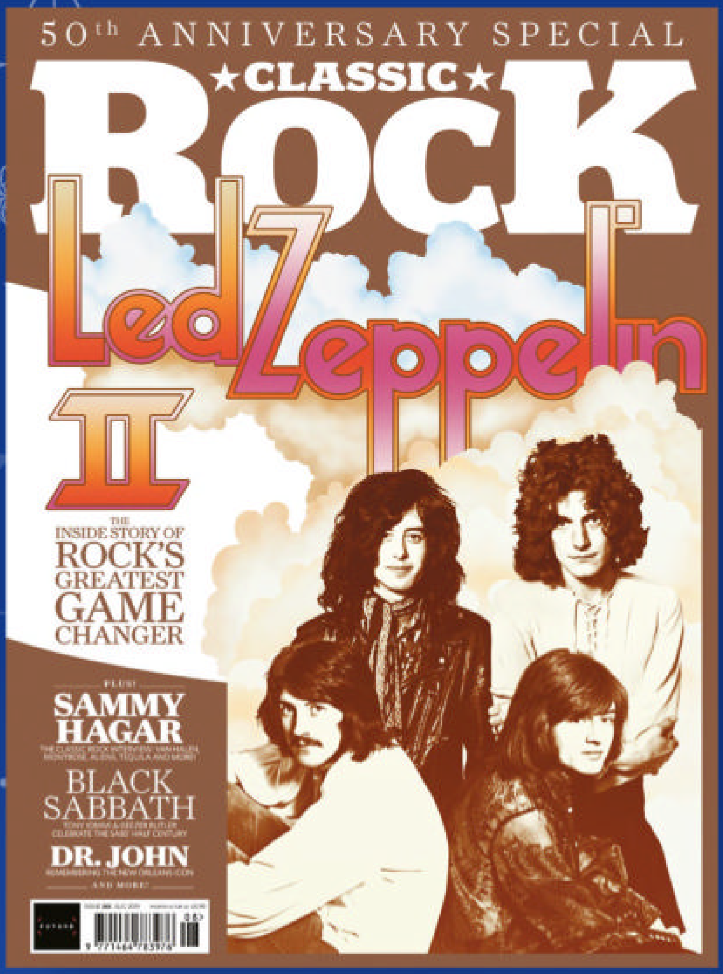
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BROTHERS OSBORNE

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM…

Brothers TJ and John Osborne wouldn't be who they are without the original country greats, grunge, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Nashville's music community, among many others.

Words: **Polly Glass**

The Brothers Osborne are full of contradictions. They're proud country fans who play a full-throttle rock show. They're part of a world with deep conservative roots, but have spoken out about gun control, featured same-sex kissing in a music video (for single *Stay A Little Longer*), and were the first major-label country artist to publicly support a Democrat (2018 Tennessee gubernatorial candidate Karl Dean). They adore the old-school heroes of rock and country, but also draw from pop, funk, grunge, jazz, jam bands and more.

All this comes to the fore on album number three, *Skeletons*. The follow-up to their introspective, ballad-heavy second, *Port Saint Joe*, it's a record built for live shows – "in arenas and beyond," they tell us – with big songs that showcase their arsenal of licks, tricks and ideas. It's as tight as they come, but also with the sort of loose vibe and effortless harmonies that make their blood relationship easy to swallow. "In our minds it's about playing *good* music," singer/younger brother TJ says. "It's not about playing a specific genre. We just wanna fucking play, that's it."

They didn't always plan to start a band together. Initially, upon arrival in Nashville, guitarist John (the eldest by two and a half years) threw himself into every sideman gig going, while TJ played upright bass and wrote songs for other artists. He struggled in the latter department because his own voice on demos "wasn't generic enough", and so began playing solo shows, hiring John on guitar.

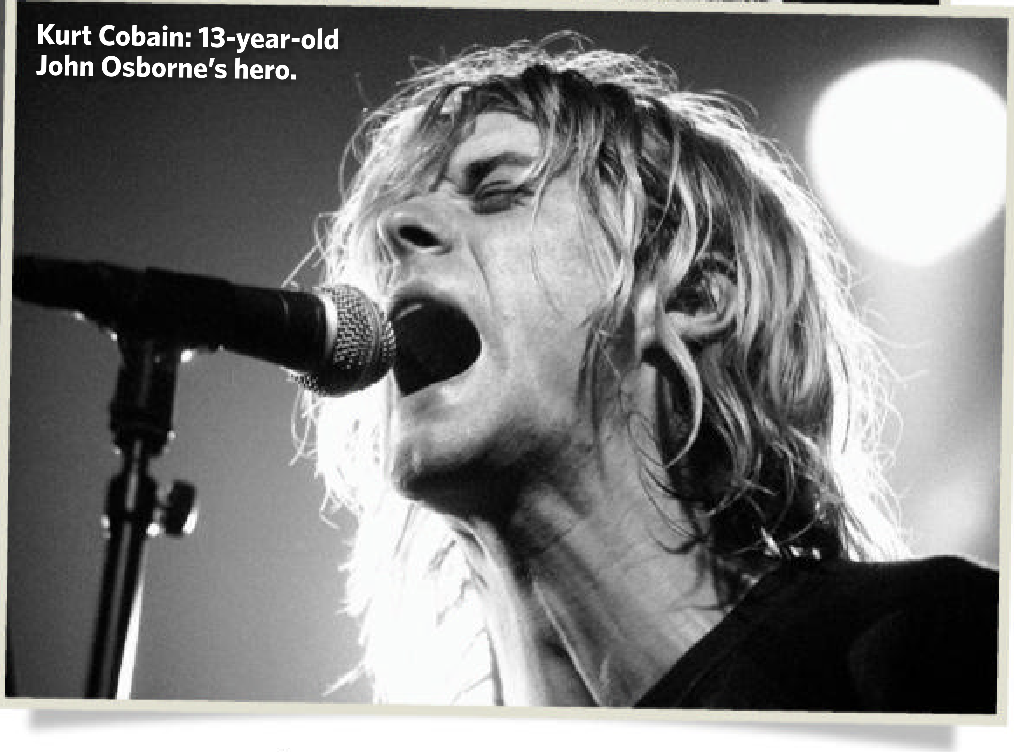
Suddenly heads really began to turn – and they were looking at *both* brothers. People started telling them they should team up. "We kept hearing it over and over again," TJ remembers. "Once we decided 'Lets do that', within a year we'd had multiple record deal offers."

Since then their path has seen them release a string of popular singles, have awards success (including six Grammy nominations), and a gratifyingly swift, steep upward curve in the size of venues they fill. If Covid-19 doesn't scupper things, they'll be playing London's Roundhouse in January 2021. And from there? Who knows? ▷

JOHN PEETS/PRESS

Hank Williams Snr: one of the original outlaws.

Prince: inspirational guitar licks.


Kurt Cobain: 13-year-old John Osborne's hero.

These are some of the people, places and things they've learned from along the way.

HANK WILLIAMS SNR AND THE OLD COUNTRY GUARD

When it comes to country, the Brothers Osborne go old-school. Alongside generous nods to classic rock icons with rootsy leanings (the Allmans, the Rolling Stones) they keep one boot firmly in the territory of Hank Williams Snr, country legend but also one of the biggest stars of American music, period, who lived fast through the 1940s and died at 29.

"We always like to pay homage to old traditional country," TJ says, "especially as country has gotten so pop-heavy that we were like… I feel like it's gotten so watered down and it's just such a weird genre right now. I mean, to me the original outlaws and rock stars were Hank Snr and Merle Haggard and Waylon [Jennings] and shit like that, so we like to do a bit of a tip of the hat to that."

PRINCE

New album *Skeletons* was made for big nights and loosened inhibitions. On it, the Osbornes' countrified rock core is spiced up with funky, danceable flavours of Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder and, perhaps most notably, The Purple One. Much of this hip-shaking side comes through John's guitar licks, as heard in the likes of *All The Good Ones Are.*

"That kinda thing is very Prince-inspired," he says. "I love that. It's hard to do that sound. I didn't quite nail it because I just have my own accent when I play the guitar naturally, I can't get away from it! But I always loved how Prince had very dry, direct guitar stabs in his songs. I thought they were so fun and so cool and percussive."

> **"I feel like country has gotten so watered down and it's just such a weird genre right now."**
>
> **TJ Osborne**

Growing up in Deale – a tiny, blue-collar fishing town in Maryland – and raised on their father's eclectic record collection, it became natural for John and TJ to mix these kinds of flavours without really realising it.

"Our dad had one of those really huge CD booklets," TJ says, "and in there would be stuff from old country like George Jones and then Dwight Yoakam and Lyle Lovett and Mariah Carey, and then the next record might be Bruce Springsteen, Robert Johnson, Bonnie Raitt or Dr John, Prince, Michael Jackson, The Beatles, the Stones…"

"And all music overlaps to some degree," John adds. "I mean, if you look at Queen doing *Another One Bites The Dust*, that's basically a disco track, and there are bands that just like that kind of dance feel. That's not conscious. My favourite artist when I was, like, six years old was Michael Jackson. I was obsessed. I would breakdance, I was horrible at it but I loved it. And I loved Stevie Wonder."

JOHN PRINE, RAY WYLIE HUBBARD, JASON ISBELL…

The Osborne brothers are no Dylan-esque poets, and nor are they trying to be, but lyrics do matter to them. Often it's the little things they pick up on, as well as the more standard southern rock subjects (whiskey, heartache, good times, whiskey…). In *I'm Not For Everyone* they laugh affectionately at the pitfalls of trying to get an audience clapping in time ('*Some people clap on the one and three, some people clap on the two and four/Some people don't join at all coz they got no rhythm, and that's alright*'). This kind of light, conversational humour

GETTY x3

TJ (left) and John Osborne: proud country fans, but their music tastes stretch much wider.

crops up throughout the Brothers' catalogue, continuing the long-standing (sometimes overlooked) tradition of witty storytellers in countrified music.

"John Prine was one of my dad's heroes. Just love John Prine," TJ enthuses. "And I listen to Ray Wylie Hubbard's stuff now and really revere him."

"John Prine definitely is the king of being able to write a song with humour, and even when he'd write a serious song there was always a 'wink'," John adds. "That's the only way I can describe it with a John Prine song. No matter what he was singing he was always winking at you in his lyrics, and I loved that. And Merle Haggard had some great humour in his songs, like *Okie From Muskogee*… If you look at art and songwriting, it reflects life. If you don't have a little bit of humour in your life, then what's the point?"

"And you have Jason Isbell now," TJ continues. "He's writing some lyrics that are really fantastic, and there's humour in there that's slid in there in a really smart way. My brother says this a lot: 'Take what you do seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously.' I agree. No one likes that shit."

KURT COBAIN AND THE GRUNGE EXPLOSION

In high school John and TJ fell in love with grunge, which now comes out in the gnarlier rock textures of their own records.

"I remember Stone Temple Pilots and Soundgarden came out and I was like: 'Holy shit ,this is awesome,'" TJ says. "That took a lot of people by storm. It just came right out of left field – it was this whole different thing no one knew existed. Because we were listening to these country records and these cool old blues records and stuff like that, and then suddenly it was like: boom! That era for us, just being teenage kids, it was like: 'Alright, you're speaking my language.' It really resonated."

"I started playing guitar when I was twelve or thirteen, and at that time Kurt Cobain was my hero," John recalls. "I loved Seattle grunge music. All I wanted to do was play Nirvana songs, and then that got me into Soundgarden, Pearl Jam… That's all I wanted to play. I loved it, y'know, it was fun to play in a band and play these kinds of things."

> **"Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix made me realise the potential of the guitar."**
>
> **John Osborne**

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

John Osborne is not typically billed as a 'guitar hero', but he's one of the best six-stringers in the business. On stage he's an easy, loose but quietly thrilling player to watch, who blends rock, blues and jazz sounds. His own hero?

"Stevie Ray Vaughan really blew the lid off for me," he says. "And Jimi Hendrix. They made me realise the potential of the guitar."

On *Skeletons*, John's breakneck instrumental *Muskrat Greene* calls to mind SRV's own fast and furious wordless staple, *Scuttle Buttin'* – but with a bluegrass heart.

"*Scuttle Buttin'*"s got a big rock blues beat to it, but you could put a train beat under it and it becomes a country song," he says, then with a laugh: "It's so fuckin' hard to play. It's like… I know how to play it, but… Stevie Ray Vaughan is one of my favourite musicians and guitar players of all time. But I don't even try to play it, really, cos it's just impossible."

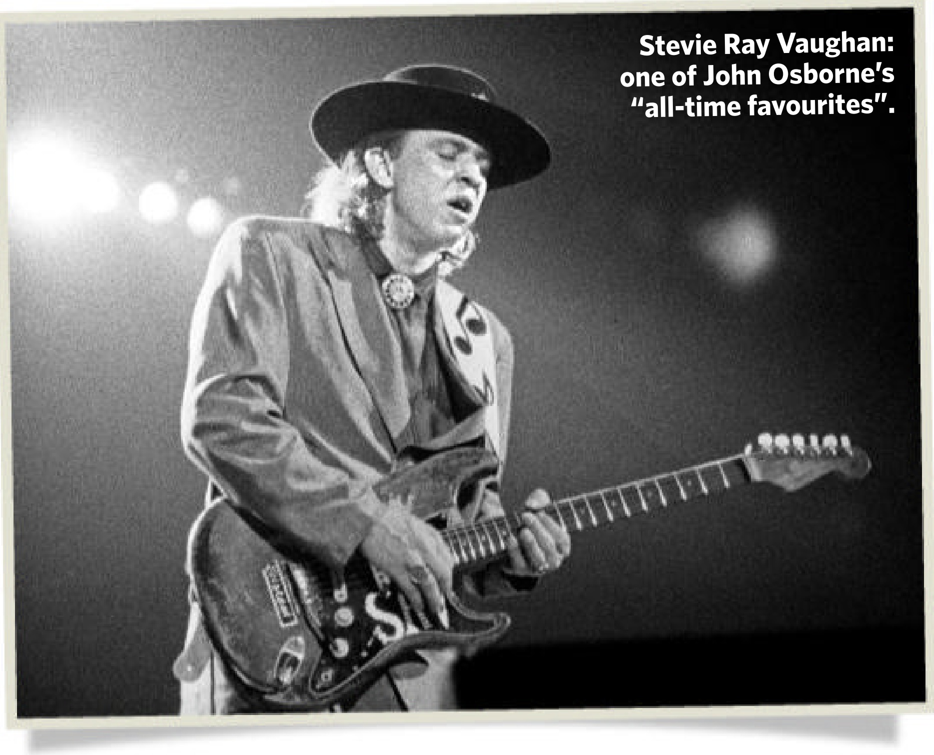
BLUEGRASS IN MARYLAND

It's not hard to trace the fiery, speedier textures of the Brothers' music back to bluegrass – a style with deep roots in their native state.

"The Appalachian Mountains run right through, so there's a lot of people from the hills that would move to Baltimore for work," John explains, "so you had a lot of hillbilly music in that area. So bluegrass music is a very big part of Maryland culture. And my mum's from West Virginia and her family is just obsessed with bluegrass, and it all just creeps its way into your style."

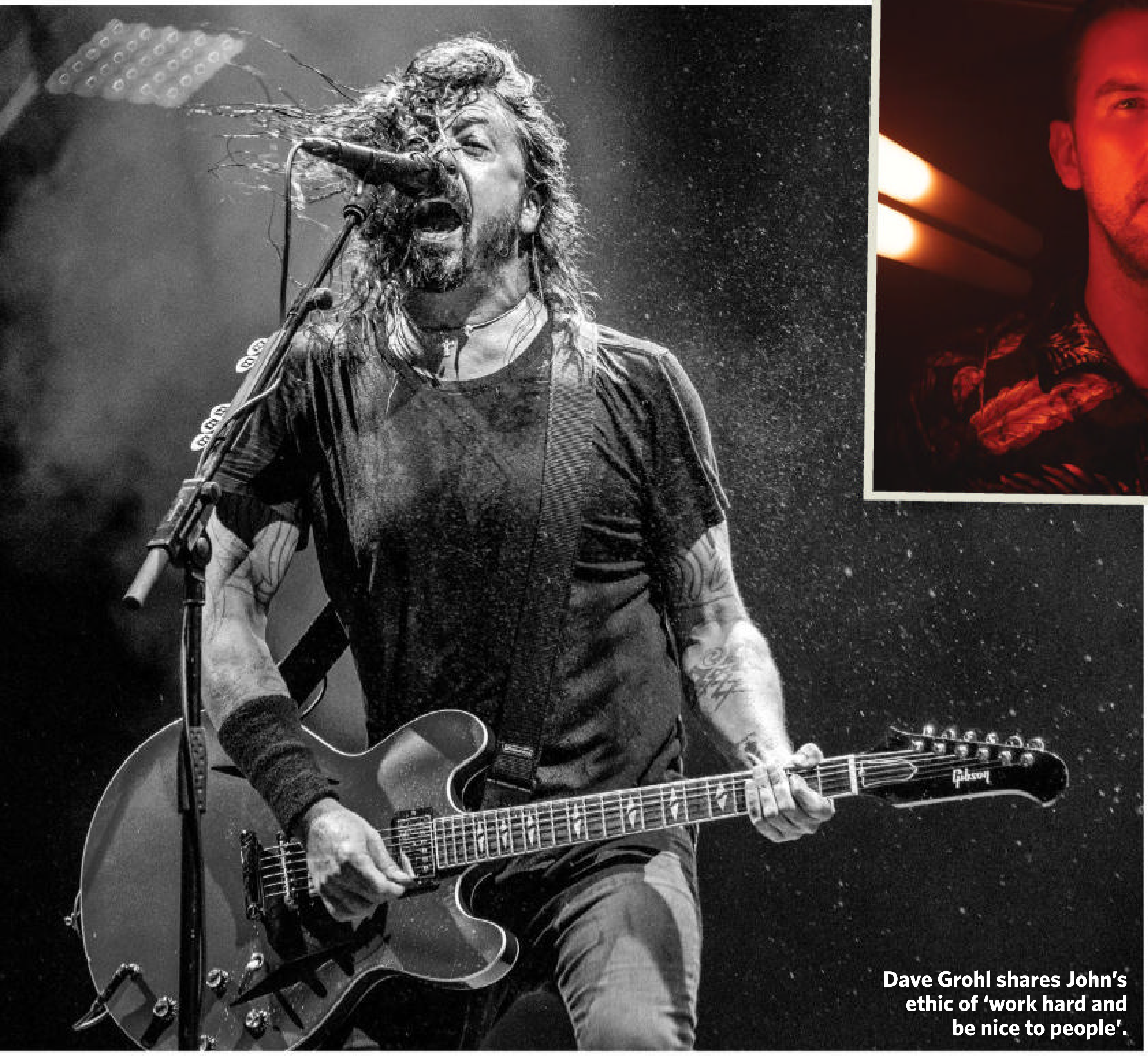
At 16 John started teaching guitar at their local record store, Good Deale Bluegrass. It turned out to be the start of a fruitful relationship with the style, which blossomed when he moved to Nashville and met bluegrass players who introduced him to the likes of Tony Rice and Clarence White.

"The owner [of Good Deale ▷


Stevie Ray Vaughan: one of John Osborne's "all-time favourites".

MAIN: JOHN PEETS/PRESS; INSET: GETTY

The Brothers Osborne: paid their dues, and now reaping the rewards.



Dave Grohl shares John's ethic of 'work hard and be nice to people'.

Bluegrass] was this guy Tim Finch, who's a phenomenal bluegrass musician, and he turned me on to a lot of stuff. He was an incredible banjo player. I started getting into Alison Krauss & Union Station… That's what really got me into it."

"They would have these jams, maybe once a month or every other week," TJ adds, "and I'd bring my upright bass and John would bring his guitar, and we didn't know any of the damn songs but we would just start playing along. And everybody would be playing; there might be eight people strumming guitars, two playing bass, people singing, There were only a couple of them that were any good, but it wasn't really about that. It was more just a fun jam."

PAYING DUES IN NASHVILLE

Moving down as 18-year-olds from Deale was a big deal. So it was a pleasant surprise to find that the small-town mind-set prevailed in Music City, even if the competition there was a lot stiffer.

"It's an easy town – as long as you're not an asshole – to find friends and get support from others," John reasons. "We're all very hard-working, we're all very ambitious, but all like to support our friends as well. The country music community in Nashville is made up of a lot of people from small towns elsewhere, and we have come together for a very similar purpose, so we just naturally get along."

"It's felt like a very tight community. I think even as Nashville grows it still has that sense of community here," TJ says. "I mean, I live just on the outskirts now, but to me the music community still has a very small hometown kinda vibe."

One crucial key to success, they discovered, was persistence – waiting tables when money was tight (and it always was) and seizing *every* music-based opportunity. For John, as a guitar-slinging gun for hire, this has resulted in an eclectic gig CV.

"I played at an Irish bar doing Irish folk music, then the same year I was playing a metal club," he recalls, laughing. "My friend's bass player couldn't make it, so I had to learn his prog-metal songs and play bass in this prog-metal band. I took a gig where we drove all the way up to Cleveland, only to get there and the promoter pulled the gig as we were pulling in, and made literally zero dollars. But looking back I wouldn't change any of those moments."

> **"My brother says: 'Take what you do seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously.' I agree."**
>
> **TJ**

FOO FIGHTERS

In 2018 the Brothers joined the Foos on stage in Edmonton, Canada for an impromptu blast through Tom Petty's *Breakdown*. Having appeared on [Foos guitarist] Chris Shiflett's podcast, they found themselves on matey terms with one of the biggest rock bands in the world.

"It really fortified the way I feel about our approach," John says, "which is basically 'work hard and be nice to people'. They are one of the most successful rock bands in history, yet they treat it like it's their first gig ever and they're excited to play. Talking to Dave Grohl was like talking to one of your peers. He never acted as if he was the drummer in Nirvana or the frontman of the Foo Fighters, he just acted like he was one of your musician friends… Literally, we talked about Maryland and steamed crabs!"

"I remember standing on that stage," TJ adds, "and seeing Dave Grohl take his guitar off and handing it to my brother and *knowing* that my brother was going to rip the shit out of that guitar. And he did. The whole place was going wild."

There is a cautionary element to this story, though, as John recalls slightly sheepishly: "If you think there's a potential that you might get up and play with a band, *don't* drink too much and smoke too much pot, cos they might just call you up on stage. And that's what happened with us! But we had fun. Fortunately we did *Breakdown*, and I've played that song a million times, so I was like: 'Okay, we're good.'"

FAMILY

Old Man's Boots, the closing song on *Skeletons*, is a touching ode to their upbringing, and their father in particular (*'I'd be lucky to walk a mile in my old man's boots,'* they sing). A self-employed plumber to this day, he raised them to work hard, whether they were helping him on jobs or playing four-hour sets in bars with his covers band. He helped pay for college and first homes. Now they're enjoying being able to give something back.

"We actually helped him buy a house, and he just moved down a few days ago to Nashville so we can be together with him," John says. "But yeah, that song is very true, word for word, and I attribute our success to his raising us and teaching us to work very hard for where you want to get in life."

John and TJ have a closer history than most bandmates. They shared bunk beds up until John graduated high school.

Were you always buddies, as well as brothers?

"Yeah, absolutely, we were always friends," John says. "Of course, we're brothers so we would fight a lot too. We would always wrestle and hit each other – no head shots. But then our parents bought us boxing gloves. I think they thought it would help, but that only made it 'free reign', so we'd just fight all the time. But then five minutes later we'd be best friends again. That's how it is still." ●

Skeletons is out now via Snakefarm Records.

MAIN: GETTY

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the pretty things
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LONDON CALLING

Fired up by the idea of making a blues-rock album in the city where many of his heroes did in the 60s, **Joe Bonamassa** beetled into Abbey Road to record, with a little help from his friends.

Words: **Grant Moon** Photos: **James Sharrock**

"I have the coronavirus," Joe Bonamassa announces as he shakes hands and sits down barely three feet away. But this is early January; 'Covid-19' sounds like the name of a bad prog band, and that whole 'thing' seems far, far away, and will probably blow over. We're oblivious to even the concept of 'social distancing', and nobody could anticipate the utter havoc that the C-word is about to wreak across the world.

We're in the upstairs observation room at Abbey Road's cavernous, breathtaking Studio One. The largest purpose-built recording room in the world, it easily accommodates the 100-strong orchestras used to soundtrack Hollywood blockbusters. It smells of aged wood, sweet dust and history. It really does. Its high walls are baffled by square and oblong soundproofing panels, seemingly placed at random but clearly not. When you speak in the 'live' room your voice sounds sharply present and then evaporates, spirited up and out into the space.

> **"Socially I'm awkward. I say things out loud that I should keep internal sometimes."**

For today's photo-shoot, Bonamassa stands in the 30-ish-feet-square corner of the room he and his band set up in to record his new album, *Royal Tea* (note the very English title). He plugs in one of his many six-figure Les Paul guitars and launches into some tasty blues licks. The sound is *massive* – crystal-clear yet steeped in the creamiest natural reverb you've ever heard; it's almost sensuous. His long-time producer Kevin Shirley is being only a little flippant when he says you can just plonk a top-end Abbey Road mic in front of a speaker here and you're in business.

Of course, despite Bonamassa's ominous self-diagnosis he doesn't actually have coronavirus. The reality is that he's been struggling with a stubborn sinus infection for the whole week that he, his band and Shirley have been here tracking the album. Shirley has his own struggle to cope with, having fallen heavily on his shoulder in Prague recently and torn muscles and/or tendons. "This whole session's been a fucking head-scratcher," Bonamassa marvels. "Injuries! Plague! The record was supposed to be done last June – we were here, it was practically written." As he recounts the obstacles that were thrown in his road, he seems pretty relaxed. But Abbey Road is the most expensive studio in the world, and the album *had* to be finished within this one, intense week here.

It's noon on Sunday – the last day of recording – and the main takes are already in the can. All ▷

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"I hope your mixing is better than your piano playing, mate!" Bassist Michael Rhodes (left) and producer Kevin Shirley.

Standing in the footprints of giants: Bonamassa in Abbey Road's huge Studio One.

that's left to add this afternoon are what Shirley calls "salt-and-pepper overdubs", i.e. one or two alternative guitar lines, a few vocal tweaks, and some guest backing vocals from Bonamassa's main co-writer for this album, former Whitesnake hitmaker (and fellow guitar collector) Bernie Marsden. Shirley will then take all the audio away to his Caveman Studios in Sydney and put the final product together. Bonamassa leaves that process entirely to him. Shirley's been a trusted collaborator since 2006's *You And Me*. He's the one who advised the young bluesman to scrub up and suit up.

Today Bonamassa's in good jeans, a freshly purchased Abbey Road Studios hoodie and that ever-present baseball cap. He's voluble and enthusiastic, his conversation crackling with a neurotic, obsessive energy. We discuss these 'interesting times': the cultural vandalism inflicted by Soho's redevelopment just four miles across town (he's aghast to learn that The Borderline has gone); the growing plight of the homeless in LA and across the USA; the Chinese government's slightly 'opaque' approach to this new virus thing. And then there's the whole reason he's flown all this way: to realise a lifelong dream.

"I was the kid who wished he'd been born here in 1945, so I could be running around London in 1965, a Les Paul in one hand and a Bluesbreaker combo in the other. To see John Mayall live, Fleetwood Mac, Zeppelin, Cream – to be on that scene, that perfect storm where Hendrix shows up – it must have been extraordinary. At that point this city was responsible for changing music. And we're still talking about it fifty-five years later. It's unrivalled, unsurpassed.

"I've always wanted to make a British-style blues rock record, like my heroes, in London. I did the last two [*Redemption* and *Blues Of Desperation*] in Nashville and they have a sound: I hear Nashville in there – the studio, the writers, I think I even said 'y'all' at one point. I wanted to live here, write the album here, record it here, and my hope was that the DNA of London and that sixties British blues boom I love so much would permeate the album. And I think it has."

Everything was originally in place back in June last year. Bonamassa had reached out to his friend Marsden, rented a flat near Abbey Road, had his gear shipped over and had set up shop. The two guitarists sat opposite each other and hammered out a set of Anglo-centric blues rockers. Bonamassa had brought along riffs and titles, and wanted Marsden to temper the music's American accent, to give it some Brit flavour.

"I'd say to Bernie: 'The American says it like this, but how does the British guy say it?' One of the songs was originally called *I Don't Want Anything From You*, but through Bernie we changed it to *Don't Do Me Any Favours*. And I never would've gotten some of the chord changes. Sometimes Bernie would go to a minor where I'd go to a major – there are these little twists and turns that indelibly linked the music to the British tradition."

He also called on Pete Brown, who wrote the lyrics for many of Cream's songs, including the hits *I Feel Free*, *White Room* and *Sunshine Of Your Love*. "I'd met him a few times. I told him: 'Pete, I need some of that beatnik crazy shit you wrote in the sixties!' Next thing I know he sends me a poem called *I Didn't Think She Would Do It*, and we cut the song. Pete's seventy-nine, and still finds a cool way to rhyme 'premonition' and 'nuclear fission'."

Britain's boogie-woogie poster boy Jools Holland also gets a writing credit on the album, as does Eurythmic Dave Stewart, and long-time Bonamassa collaborator James House contributed to what became the title track. "We needed a fucked-up blues. James was in town, so here it is," Bonamassa says. "We wrote *Royal Tea* and *Lookout Man* this week, but otherwise the record was already written by last June."

Studio Two (aka the Beatles room/the Pink Floyd room, take your pick) was booked for June 2019. But then three days before Team Bonamassa were due to fly over, his long-time drummer Anton Fig fell and broke his right foot in three places. Options were weighed up, major names were considered as replacements, but ultimately Bonamassa decided to delay the recording.

"And I'm glad we did," he says. "Anton's an important part of the band's sound, and we have those two new songs we wouldn't have had last year. Everything happens for a reason."

The expensive rescheduling meant moving from Studio Two to the much bigger One, but maybe that happened for a reason too. In here the main control room – Shirley's lair with the mixing desk and Pro Tools gear – is on ground level, in Two it's up a steep, unforgiving flight of stairs, less conducive for nipping in and out to confer and check things, especially for a band of this vintage.

Just before Fig, Michael Rhodes ("the most recorded bassist of all time", Shirley tells us) and keyboard player Reese Wynans arrived in London, Bonamassa and Shirley reviewed and re-demoed all the songs so that the band could get straight to work. Under time pressure things ran pretty well, the highly seasoned players averaging two or three songs per day. Bonamassa's sinus infection presented a problem but eased, and in a marathon Saturday session that lasted from 11am until 6pm he nailed the lead vocals for seven tracks – and treated himself to a cigar afterwards.

> **"One of the things I run from in my life is average. Normal. Lukewarm. I want to be loved or hated. I want to be a character."**

Along with the accidents, ailments and logistical challenges, the *Royal Tea* album comes in the aftermath of more seismic upheavals in Bonamassa's personal life. In June 2018 *Classic Rock* joined him on his tour bus as he travelled between shows in Holland and Belgium. At the time, his relationship with his girlfriend was unravelling and he cut a forlorn figure. He was sad, distracted as he nursed a whisky, and clung to his phone, deep into it with someone, in all senses, thousands of miles away. He shakes his head ruefully at the memory. "I was a hot mess. I had no business being on the road," he recalls. "The bottom floor fell out from under my life overnight. I was playing and singing okay at those shows, but I was shaken to my core. She had called it off, and that was the implosion."

When he got home to LA he made changes. He quit drinking, just to prove that he could. He cut off some of his fair-weather 'Hollywood friends' who were taking up too much of his bandwidth, and he focused on reconciling with his girl. "That lasted for a year and a half, and then we finally decided to end it last year, because we didn't want to resent each other. We were friends first and had known each other for a decade. We love and respect each other; it was never 'Fuck you!', 'No fuck *you*!' It was difficult. But as soon as we made the decision, the pressure was off and we were our normal selves again."

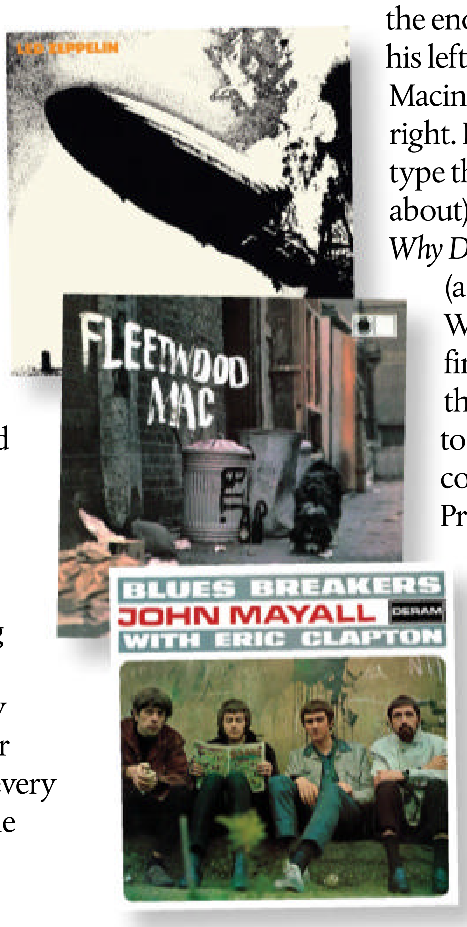
It was suggested to Bonamassa that he see a therapist. And he did go, seeing a "nice woman in a nice office in Beverly Hills" just twice before deciding it wasn't for him. He even got a cool song out of it, *A Conversation With Alice* (not her real name). "I did some psychoanalysis while talking to her. I said that one of the things I run from in my life is average. Normal. Lukewarm. I want to be loved or hated. I want to be a character. 'Why can't you be a little bit more normal?' 'Why do you

have to buy every fucking guitar that you see?' 'Why do you fixate on things and go down these rabbit holes and act like the neurotic kid?' You know what? That makes me good at my *job*. I am an eccentric person, and the older I get the more of a character I become. Socially I'm awkward. I say things out loud that I should keep internal sometimes and I don't shy away from having an opinion on things. But it makes me *good at my job*. Part of this album was embracing that, and getting a little angry, finding that piss and vinegar from my twenties again."

It's as if the split has charged Bonamassa with cognitively dissonant, 'sorry-not-sorry' energy. His girlfriend called him out on certain damaging behaviours – cynicism and inflexibility chief among them – and he says that this album "is almost like a thank-you letter to her for calling me out and pulling the ejector seat. She saved me from spiralling into worse patterns of behaviour, and I'll really be forever grateful."

But then he has also re-evaluated certain intractable traits that have helped put him where he is today. "Part of the cathartic thing about the album is addressing those things about me that were wearing on her. She was hopeful I would change. But I'm very rigid. I live my best life. I play blues-rock music for hundreds of thousands of people every year. I tour the world. People call me 'Mr Bonamassa' at nice restaurants. Why would I want to psychoanalyse it? I've accomplished everything I've ever wanted to do, I'm so happy with what I have. Every left-hand turn I took, right or wrong, worked out. Every personal relationship I had led to this moment. You can't undo the past, and nor would you want to."

Who says therapy doesn't help you see the wood not the trees?

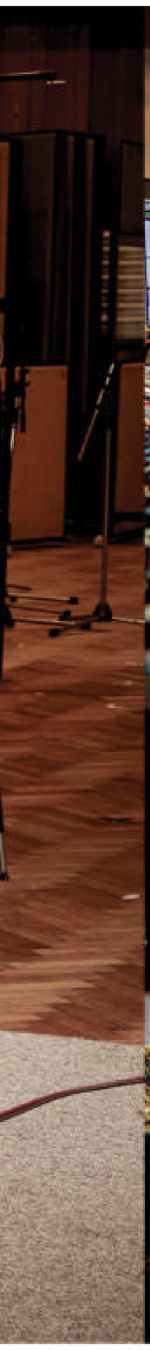


Later in the afternoon that we meet, we're in the control booth of Studio One. With Abbey Road's attentive assistant engineer Chris Parker at his side, Kevin Shirley is working the enormous Neve mixing console to his left, and tapping keys on the Macintosh running Pro Tools to his right. Pumping out of the speakers (the type that audiophiles have wet dreams about) is a baleful power ballad called *Why Does It Take So Long To Say Goodbye* (a little Deep Purple, a lot Whitesnake, Bernie Marsden's fingerprints all over it). Rigged over the desk and window giving out on to that grand live room, a massive computer monitor relays Shirley's Pro Tools display: guitars, bass, drums, keyboards and vocals streak right to left as audio waveforms in blue, red and pink. "I really like that 'brown' sound you had yesterday," Shirley tells Bonamassa. "Let's do it," says the guitarist, and work resumes.

The irony is that Bonamassa has already freighted "a million and half dollars' worth" of guitars and other gear back to the States, so today he's slumming it with the most beautiful Gibson Les Paul – duly set up by stalwart guitar tech Mike Hickey – and, in the amp room next door, a hundred-quid practice amp purchased from Macari's on Denmark Street for his hotel room ("It's got a "good, tight mid-range", apparently). With the track booming from the speakers, Bonamassa leans over the fretboard and doubles the main riff. From a few feet away you can see him concentrating. There's another take, then Shirley nods. "Great. He's pretty good really, isn't he?" he asks the room. And we (the PR, record company rep, Bonamassa's videographer) have to agree – he's not bad at all.

Shirley's smile is broad, as are his shoulders, his South African accent, and – at times – his acute sense of humour. ("Why Does It Take So Long To Say Goodbye? Because they won't fucking *leave!*") You wouldn't want to piss him off, but the producer runs a happy, efficient studio. Whether giving orders in an Austin Powers accent or musing that racoons are actually miniature pandas, he makes the whole process fun.

To do some vocal re-takes, Bonamassa heads for the adjacent microphone room and puts on headphones. With his sinuses now clear, he does a line here, doubles a chorus there. There's a '*fucking*' in the urgent, down-tuned rocker *Every Time One Door Opens* that needs an alternative, U-certificate '*freaking*'. Similarly, a galloping, Iron Maiden-style anthem that includes Pete Brown's very English line '*Stop your fuckin' moanin'* needs what Bonamassa calls a "Walmart version, in the



Something a little stronger than tea for Bonamassa, Kevin Shirley (left) and Michael Rhodes.

Tea time during *Tea* time for Bernie Marsden.

event that we need it for, say, a car commercial. We'll record it now to save flying all over the world later, matching microphones."

Bassist Michael Rhodes enters the room. Tall and wiry, decked out in black from beanie to boots. Every line in his face has been earned over 60-plus years, each one a chapter-in-waiting for a riveting memoir as yet unwritten. To shake Rhodes's big right hand is to feel your own as a child's. He and his wife will be heading home to Nashville in the morning, and they've come to say goodbye and see how it's going. Over the intercom Shirley asks Bonamassa to do another take of the *'fucking moanin''* line but to make it angrier. "Think of Biloxi Mississippi," Rhodes offers cryptically in his warm Louisiana tones. "That'll make you angry!" Bonamassa doesn't reply, just shoots him an in-joke grin.

> **"My hope was that the DNA of London and that sixties British blues boom I love so much would permeate the album."**

Next is a bluesy shuffle called *Hangups* (original title: *Excess Baggage*). Shirley offers to put a tubular bell over the *'shit'* in *'I got me a woman/Shit, she's crazy as hell!'* "A broken bottle!" Rhodes suggests. They opt to edit the word out altogether.

Bearing in mind our conversation about Bonamassa's ex-, won't there be some clarification required when she gets to hear some of *Royal Tea's* more acidic lyrics?

"Oh, I'll be getting a call mid-October," he says, smiling in the teeth of that awkward conversation to come. "This is by no means directed at my ex-partner. This is what songwriters do. She's a songwriter so she'll understand conceptually why I did it. But yes, that call's coming, guaranteed!"

The afternoon drifts by. These people are easy in their own talents, comfortable with each other's, and all of them share the same goal. You begin to see why good results have come so quickly – it's experience. Even in this rough mix, the music is shaping up so well.

Bonamassa leaves to pose for more photos. He returns wearing jeans, shirt and suit jacket, declaring today to be "Business Casual Sunday". In down time he and Rhodes discuss the best brass sounds on record. Rhodes loves the Memphis Horns, how they were always just a *little* out of tune. On his phone Bonamassa calls up Albert Collins's *Frosty* as an example of the cool, nonchalant way he likes his brass.

Bernie Marsden arrives and is greeted with hugs. There are erudite words and in-gags about the record so far, and Shirley gives him a rough plan of what's required for him "to earn his honorarium". During a quick photo-shoot Marsden and Shirley smile and jokingly jostle for position, each in the hope of hiding their girth behind the other's. Charismatic, fun and smart, Marsden emanates a very English sense of rock aristocracy. His place in this project makes even more sense with him in the room. He's barely finished his coffee and most of a bunch of grapes before he's marched into the vocal booth with Bonamassa, where he adds his English tones to catchy rocker *High Class Girl* (with *'low-class ways'*). Then he sweetens the chorus of the mid-tempo *Savannah*. This one's in a southern, Allman Brothers mode, and is the least British-sounding tune so far.

With that creamy reverb pouring back into the control room from Studio One, Bonamassa's last guitar take is a stunning slide piece for the track. He plays it on a recent addition to his world-famous collection. Christened 'Lazarus', this 1959 Les Paul was painted a crude red when he bought it. He's had it restored, and reckons that in its current condition it's worth about three *hundred thousand* dollars. So, given that jaw-dropping figure, how does it play? Does it *feel* like $300k? He shrugs and says: "It just plays like a fifty-nine Les Paul. The value's all in these tiger stripes." He smooths his fingertips over its gleaming finish.

By early evening Shirley's got everything he needs, and Team Bonamassa's British adventure is winding down. Audio files are downloaded, gear is broken down, and Abbey Road runner Marta brings in some bottles of very fine red wine, on the house. Some unprintable professional anecdotes/war stories are shared, and talk turns to flights home and Bonamassa's 'Keepin The Blues Alive At Sea' Mediterranean cruise in June. (Nobody knows it now, but that will end up being postponed until 2021, yet another corona-casualty in this "fucking head-scratcher" of a year.)

For now, though, here in this moment, it might as well be 1968. ●

Royal Tea is out on October 23 via Mascot/ J&R Adventures.

MARCO OVANDO/PRESS

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
SKIN

Your youth should be a time of rebellion. The man-made part of religion is disgusting. Don't be afraid of a challenge. Star quality can't be acquired… These are among the things that shape her world view.

Interview: **Emma Johnston**

As the spokesperson and focal point of Skunk Anansie, Skin has travelled the world, played to huge audiences and met legends. But in her new memoir, *It Takes Blood And Guts*, the singer sheds light on her childhood in South London, and the experiences that shaped her into the force of nature we see today. Here she talks us through what she's learned on the journey.

YOU CAN'T FAKE THE ROCK-STAR AURA. SOME PEOPLE ARE JUST BORN WITH IT.

"I think that it's somebody who makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck. It's someone who knows how to command an audience. Some people walk out on to the stage and you think, bloody hell, they've just done something to you. Like when Axl Rose used to first walk out on stage – what is it about this guy that he has such flavour to him? That's a special chemistry that some people just have. It's an unknown quantity. That's why every amazing singer isn't famous. Some people have got the sparkle dust and some haven't."

RACISM HAS GROWN SINCE TRUMP CAME TO POWER AND THE UK VOTED FOR BREXIT.

"Black Lives Matter is really important, because there's been an air when black people talk about racism, they kind of get shoved to the side. No one really wanted to talk about it. And now it's put it right smack front and centre in front of people's faces. It's really vital that people put this at the forefront of conversation, because racism and anti-semitism have been getting worse and worse over the last few years. There's some things happening now that have similarities to what was happening in the 1930s just before Hitler came to power, and it was a slow erosion of rights of people over a long period of time. If you're not the one being persecuted, it's very easy to step aside and not get involved. I'm not calling Trump a Nazi, but I am saying there's a very drip, drip erosion of rights. So I'm really pleased about Black Lives Matter. I really support it, obviously, because I'm a black person and my life matters. And I think it's made a lot of white people much more aware of all the subtleties of racism, all the things that are happening that they didn't see."

> **"In England people see me quite seriously. But I'm actually quite goofy, quite ridiculous."**

IN THE BOOK, I TALK ABOUT BEING BEATEN UP BY MY FIRST BOYFRIEND. IF YOU'RE IN THAT POSITION, GET THE FUCK OUT OF IT.

"He's not going to change, and it's not up to you to make him change. For me there was a lot of mental kind of stuff, and he only hit me that one time. But I had this overwhelming feeling of: 'I've got to get out of this.' If that happens, get out of that relationship there and then. Don't believe a word they say and don't think that you can change them. I don't know any men around me that hit women. It's not a normal thing for a man to do, and it's a very small percentage of men. If you've got one of those, leave that one behind."

I GREW UP IN THE CHURCH, BUT QUESTIONED THE TEACHINGS.

"I kind of believe in some things, and some things I don't. I think within a lot of religions you can see the man-made part of it, and you can see the spirituality. The man-made part is the part that disgusts me, because that is the part where you see women and gay people and trans people being treated really badly. But as long as I see people behaving respectfully I'm cool with it. The thing about religion is there are so many strains and cultures. Religion has really helped my people in massive ways, so I have a healthy respect and a lot of tolerance."

GETTING AWAY FROM HOME FOR THE FIRST TIME WAS A MASSIVE LEARNING CURVE.

"Studying at uni in Middlesborough, because I was gay and discovering my sexuality I was able to step out of that student bubble and actually became friends with a lot of people from Middlesborough, who were a separate thing, they'd lived and worked there their whole lives. I was able to experience it on three levels, because that was when I started singing. I originally started singing jazz, so I was able to go to little jazz clubs. I think that when people don't know where you're from or what you are they don't prejudge you, they just see you as what's in front of their face. So I was able to be myself and work out who I was, discover what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it; have lots of different experiences and experimentations with things, with arts and music, with gay culture, with being a student."

I THINK IT'S EASIER FOR KIDS TO DISCOVER THEIR SEXUALITY NOW.

"For me it was a completely different time and it was way more homophobic. With social media you have ways to find your people online, and you can be in a town in the middle of nowhere but you can experience a whole world and be connected to people all over the world. When I was a kid and coming out it was still a very bad thing. It was normal to be homophobic, and most people had that viewpoint. It's not like homophobia has died, but I think it's easier to get support and to find like-minded people. And also there's more representation and there are more gay allies. That's definitely a lot easier than when I was growing up." ▷

Skunk Anansie: (l-r) Cass, Mark Richardson, Skin, Ace.

Skin with Skunk Anansie in London in 1994.

JAMAICAN FOOD FEELS LIKE HOME.

"My mum didn't make English food when I was growing up, she only made Jamaican food. So when we started going to school and having school dinners it was a little alien at first. Food really reminds me of where I'm from and who I am – my Jamaican heritage. That feels good."

I LEARNED A LOT OF DISCIPLINE FROM MY PARENTS.

"My mum was very 'no excuses', you have to go to school. Also, my mum did a lot of higher education, she loved studying. I think that was quite a good example growing up – you have to work to learn something, and you finish it. When things get hard there's a part of your personality that doesn't want to continue because it's too hard. I think in those early studying years, breaking through that barrier and not failing, and succeeding, is a very important skill to learn because you can take it anywhere in your life. Thinking: 'It's hard, but I'm not going to give up.' I'm not scared of a challenge, I like a challenge."

> **"Black Lives Matter has made a lot of white people much more aware of all the subtleties of racism."**

I DID [TV SHOW] *THE MASKED SINGER* SO PEOPLE WOULD SEE ANOTHER SIDE OF ME.

"It was really fun when you're out there singing with the audience on the stage. It's fucking terrifying, and it's really hard to sing in those outfits [Skin perfomed as Duck]. But you spend a lot of time backstage on your own. There's no hanging out like there is on other TV shows, because you have to stay away from everybody. I like doing stuff like that because I think in England people see me quite seriously. But I'm actually quite goofy, quite ridiculous. I did it to change people's opinions of what I was about. And I think it actually did that."

OUR EARLIEST SKUNK GIGS WERE ELECTRIFYING.

"I wish I was in the audience seeing one of them, because we were on *fire*. Those early gigs we were one of the best bands Britain has ever seen. When you are in it you don't see it, but when you look back you're like: 'My God, that must have been good.' There's still nothing like us in the world, there's still not another band like Skunk Anansie. We're kind of a one-off."

ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS.

"Headlining Glastonbury [in 1999] was right up there. I think the first American tour was so fun and so amazing and such an eye-opener, it was mad from start to finish. And that's something you can never take away. But loads of great things. I sung with Pavarotti, met Nelson Mandela. All of those things were really amazing."

NELSON MANDELA WAS SOMEONE WHO HAD BEEN TO HELL AND BACK, AND TAKEN THE HIGH ROAD WHEN EVERYONE ELSE WAS GOING LOW.

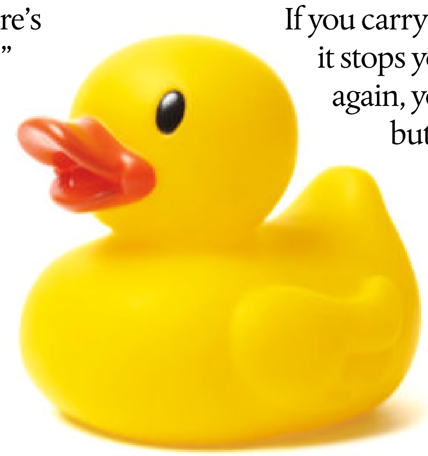
"Being in South Africa and hearing the stories of torture and everything they went through, it's almost impossible to imagine how great someone's spirit must be to be able to move above that. I think very few people would not have a lot of hate in their heart having gone through what he had. The Apartheid government were disgusting and morally abhorrent on every level. They were torturing children, raping women, killing people, treating black people like they're dogs. And you think he went through all of that and he still decided that it was better to take the high road and lead his people to a better place instead of retribution. I think that's the one lesson that I always take away from that. When they go low, you go high. It's that simple."

YOUR YOUTH SHOULD BE A TIME OF REBELLION.

"I used to sneak out all the time to go clubbing and to gigs, because I was from a very strict religious family. Luckily I never got caught. There's nothing better than sneaking out and doing something you shouldn't be doing and not getting caught. I think that's character building. I mean, look after yourself, but every kid should have a period when they're thirteen, fourteen, going out to go to gigs and snogging boys."

NEVER LET REGRETS DRAG YOU DOWN.

"I have a couple, but what's the point? I've seen what regret can do to people, and I've seen how it can destroy the now. I don't think it's worth it for your own human spirit and mind. Regret is so bad for your soul, it's bad for your spirit. If you've done something disgusting, then you carry that weight for the rest of your life. Everybody's got a few of those. But you can't make it twist and turn. If you carry that weight too hard and you have that much guilt about it, it stops you doing what you want to do now. You should never do it again, you should learn from it and take that with you in the future, but you shouldn't make it destroy your spirit."



THE LYRIC I'M MOST PROUD OF STILL MEANS EVERYTHING TODAY.

"'*Yes it's fucking political*' still stands. Everything's political." ●

It Takes Blood And Guts, by Skin with Lucy O'Brien, is available now via Simon & Schuster.

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OUT OF DARKNES

Heavy with death, haunted by mental illness – but always laced with hope – **Marilyn Manson**'s new record is a fitting soundtrack to the end of days. The infamous frontman and his collaborator on the album **Shooter Jennings** talk about the life and crimes behind *We Are Chaos*.

Words: **Henry Yates** Photos: **Travis Shinn**

As a sometime music writer, Marilyn Manson knows the value of mythology. It's past midnight in California when he phones from his Los Angeles home – a detail that chimes nicely with our perception of shock-rock's crown prince as a thing that goes bump in the night. He shrugs off the suggestion that he should be in bed, not doing press. "I'm nocturnal," he says. "I have been completely at a loss for time, because of the circumstances we're in. And my house has dark window shades, so when I wake up I never know if it's day or night."

As we will discover, Manson has found lockdown "mentally devastating", and despite a three-decade career built on all things macabre he sees little black humour in the mounting death toll from Covid-19. "No. People getting sick and dying, in an uncontrollable fashion they can't contain, that's not in any way something I think should be taken lightly. We're battling a plague that is not of our time. We've never experienced something this awful. I understand what you're saying, in the Antichrist sense of it. But my dream of an apocalypse would be much more interesting and colourful."

> **"We're battling a plague... My dream of an apocalypse would be much more interesting and colourful."**
>
> **Marilyn Manson**

In these dark times, the light beneath Manson's blackout curtain is his latest, and certainly most interesting album. Written and produced with alt. country star and fellow slasher-flick connoisseur Shooter Jennings, *We Are Chaos* is a Manson record that shocks not so much with its bogeyman bric-a-brac as with its breadth of vision.

"We're both opinionated," Jennings tells me, a week later. "We love a lot of music, and we were both showing things to each other. There was a lot to learn from him. Like really deep-cut Roxy Music, or Love And Rockets and Fields Of The Nephilim. Bands I never knew about that I became obsessed with afterwards. Bowie is where we come together. And Bowie was always dark, y'know?"

At times on the album the old Manson dies hard, with the glam-jackboot stomp of early hit *The Beautiful People* leaving its aftertaste on *Perfume*. Elsewhere the gloomy synths of *Don't Chase The Dead, Half-Way & One Step Forward* and *Keep My Head Together* represent what Jennings calls "a new goth", touched by Bauhaus, The Cure and Joy Division, while *Paint Me With Your Love* is a sweet-tooth ballad with one eye on country radio, and the title track's melancholy jangle sails close to The Beatles' *Across The Universe*.

"I once said in an interview that I am chaos incarnate," Manson reflects. "But this song is called *We Are Chaos*, which makes it more of an anthem. You include the word 'we', and suddenly it's everyone singing along. So I think it's my version of *We Are The World*," he says with a chuckle.

Throughout, Jennings's atmospheric production puts Manson under your skin. The pair's collaboration is long and knotty – an aborted song for the *Sons Of Anarchy* TV show, a cover of Bowie's *Cat People* in 2016 – but in a city known for fakery their friendship has lasted. "Out here in LA, Manson is my best friend," says the 41-year-old. "We get together, watch scary movies. I've always had a fascination with the dark side of things. When I was a little kid my dad [outlaw country legend ▷

Shooter Jennings: not your cowboy hat-wearing country guy.

Fans of the darker side of things: Jennings and Manson in January 2020.

Waylon Jennings] used to wake me up in the middle of the night and say: 'There's a scary movie on TV. Wanna come watch?' I'd go down, get scared to death, go to bed crying. But then, I just wanted to watch more. Me and Manson just watched *The Holy Mountain* together, one of the darkest movies ever."

Jennings bristles a little, though, at the suggestion that as part of the country crowd he's an odd choice as the album's producer.

"No, because you're looking at it from the outside," he offers. "I don't walk around in a cowboy hat. We're fuckin' friends, y'know? Marilyn Manson and Nine Inch Nails were two of the most influential bands in my life when I was young. I had to have a girlfriend buy me [Manson's '94 record] *Portrait Of An American Family* because of all the news hype. So I knew in my heart that I could knock this record out of the park. I knew that I was scared of how it was gonna happen. Because I didn't know. It was like climbing a mountain in the dark."

> **"Marilyn Manson and Nine Inch Nails were two of the most influential bands in my life when I was young."**
>
> **Shooter Jennings**

The admiration is mutual. "I used to walk out on stage to *Fuck You (I'm Famous)*, not knowing Shooter yet, just loving the song," Manson says. "*All Of This Could Have Been Yours*, off his *Black Ribbons* album, was the first song on my dressing room playlist."

Pre-covid, the pair tossed ideas for *We Are Chaos* back and forth from their respective tour buses, recording when possible at each other's home studios. Manson believes the first track they worked on was *Half-Way & One Step Forward*. Jennings thinks it might have been the standout nu-goth *Don't Chase The Dead*. "I played bass and Manson was just messing around, doing this crazy 'noise' guitar on my Gibson SG. We really like the song *I'm Not Like Everybody Else* by The Kinks, so I was trying to come up with something that had that vibe. And we just kept going."

The title track was sparked by a night of low-level criminality last October.

"Shooter and I attended a Brandi Carlile concert at Disney Hall in LA," Manson recalls. "That night, as we left, I convinced him to steal a chair from some banquet room. We went home to his studio, and I sat in this Disney chair and sang the final vocals for *We Are Chaos*. That chair brought the Disney magic into my ass and through the microphone. So you can thank Mickey Mouse for that song. But then next morning Shooter was awakened by the police…"

Jennings: "They had security camera footage of us taking it, and said: 'If you bring the chair back we won't press charges.'"

If the pair are clear about the album's musical touchstones, the song meanings prove harder to tease out. Jennings offers the half-explanation that "the lyrics are like a palette for the listener to paint their own story". Manson prefers to talk atmospheres rather than specifics, although he dwells longer on *Infinite Darkness*, the sinister opener to the record's more downbeat second half that reminds us that *'you're dead longer than you're alive'*. "When we did that song we'd both lost people," he explains. "So I guess it's about mortality. It's about the idea that death is something you can succeed at easily, but having the courage to be alive, and face shit, is more difficult. The second half of the record has a different bitterness."

As for the relatively upbeat title track, Manson says it's both an excavation of his own psyche and a call to damaged people everywhere, acknowledging that their pains are not so different. "It's about the mental state I was in, that people could relate to. Because everyone goes through their traumas." ▷

SHOOTER JENNINGS: SCOTT DUDELSON; INSET: GETTY

“For the past twenty years, all I’ve known is to get on stage and sing. I can’t do that. So it is mentally devastating.”

Marilyn Manson

“I’ll probably somehow get blamed for causing the world to fall apart, I’m sure. I’m not looking for that credit.”

Marilyn Manson

Marilyn Manson in Paris, November 2017. He hopes "that some day in the near future I will get to play these [new] songs live".

GETTY

Mental health is a huge issue now, isn't it?

"Oh, it always has been. I mean, my mother suffered from schizophrenia. I couldn't say exactly what version of my brain is 'good' or 'bad', but I know it's probably very taxing to be in a romantic relationship with me. I've tried to become a better person. I think everyone has the ability to change. It's about becoming the best version of yourself you can possibly be. Even if you're the best terrible piece of shit, there's something to be said for that.

"But hopefully I'm not a terrible piece of shit," he considers. "I'm just the best version of me. Which is flawed, not perfect, trying to do something that makes me happy, and brings happiness to other people. I feel like I've given something to the world, instead of taking something out."

Both men agree the key track on *We Are Chaos* is *Broken Needle*, which closes the record with the finality of a casket trundling into a furnace.

"We wanted the whole record to encapsulate these different styles," says Jennings. "You have moments that are acoustic, mechanical, rock'n'roll. And I think we did it all with that one song. Yet it still has this dark, sombre, aching quality. And I love that if you play *We Are Chaos* on your record player, once you get to the end of that song it will never stop playing unless you take the needle off."

So it was finished. But then along came covid. Lockdown, says Manson, has been swings and roundabouts. "It's hard to say if [the Christian right] is giving me a hard time right now, because I don't think churches are even open. Churches aren't open. Schools aren't open. So that rules out a lot of trouble spots. A lot of troublemakers are out of a job. I'll probably somehow get blamed for causing the world to fall apart, I'm sure. I'm not looking for that credit."

Is life right now worse than usual, or is this just history repeating?

"Life has never been quite perfect, at any point. I can remember my childhood years, my early memories of growing up, and JFK was assassinated, and Vietnam. There's always been terrible things. On this record I was talking about how life has always been. It just happens to be worse now. But I try to focus on what I have, which is a great set of five cats, and the hope that some day in the near future I will get to play these songs live."

> **"I'm trying to do something that makes me happy, and brings happiness to other people."**
>
> **Marilyn Manson**

And that's the real kicker of confinement, he says. Manson doesn't go out much anyway, but the enforced absence from the stage is like being denied oxygen. "Being unable to perform live…" he tails off. "It's not a complaint, like some moody, arrogant rock star saying I can't do my job so woe is me. But for the past twenty years, all I've known is to get on stage and sing. I can't do that. So it is mentally devastating. When you're in quarantine your life becomes a macrocosm or a microcosm. You get confused. You don't know what the reality is, apart from what's around you. And that can drive you insane."

What's strange is how perfectly the mood of the *We Are Chaos* album fits with these times – almost as though Manson looked ahead through those ghoulish contact lenses and saw the pandemic coming down the pipe.

"It's weird," says Jennings, "because these songs were written way before. But I think it's a good time for this record. It's not about UFOs, werewolves and demons. It's something deeply romantic that can touch people. It's what people need. I think Manson's lyrics offer a glimpse of light through the darkness."

The old Antichrist Superstar knows better than to step entirely into the light; even during a pandemic, mythology still matters. But it's that balance – the opposing sweet and sour of these songs – that makes *We Are Chaos* such a compelling soundtrack to the unfolding cataclysm of 2020.

"I'm saying that we're all fucked," Manson explains. "And this is what it is. But it's not necessarily the end. It's more like: 'But you can fix it, if you want to.' With all the darkness and emotion playing out through the album, there's a beam of hope at the end. Because otherwise, what's the point of making art?

"I'm not a fatalist," he concludes. "I don't see this as being the end of everything. But I am posing the thought to myself – and to whoever's listening – that if this is the last day, let's make it worth something. Knowing that you may not be here tomorrow, you'd better make today fucking great." ●

We Are Chaos is out now via Loma Vista.

ROYALREPUBLIC: LEO AKESSON/PRESS

The HOT LIST

THE 12 ESSENTIAL NEW ROCK TRACKS YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS MONTH AND THE BANDS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR

Here's the thing: rock'n'roll is in brilliant shape. Seriously, there's a ton of scorching new stuff across the many, varied layers of rock, and it's constantly being refreshed. If you're reading this magazine, chances are you're well aware of this.

So it's hard to know whether to laugh, sigh or cry when naysayers moan that there isn't anything new and good out there. Whatever your specific taste – your preferred shades of music that rocks – it's simply not true. You just need to know where to look. Which is where we hope The Hot List can help.

We might not be going to many (or indeed any) gigs for the rest of this year, but that certainly doesn't mean people have stopped making music. They *really* haven't. In particular, rock's newest guys and girls have recorded and put out loads of tracks that have remained on our playlists, and stuck in our heads like beer-sticky boots to the Borderline/Deaf Institute/Rock City/insert-favourite-venue floor.

Over the next few pages we'll be flagging up a selection of killer tracks from new faces, rising stars and under-the-radar acts that we think deserve your attention. If you like what you find, check out more from the artists responsible. Order some music. Buy one of their T-shirts or other merch. Whatever turns you on.

For more recommendations (and also to vote for your favourite track) head to loudersound.com every Monday for *Classic Rock*'s Tracks Of The Week.

Royal Republic

Superlove

THE SPIRIT OF Freddie Mercury meets *American Beauty* in this new single/music video from these Swedish disco rockers. Just look at the key ingredients: bathtubful of rose petals; magnificent moustache; Queen-nodding bass groove and *I Want To Break Free* flavours in the verse, mixed with Converse-stompin', singalong touches of Muse in the chorus. It's as ridiculous as it sounds – and we mean that in an extremely flattering way.

Find out more at *www.royalrepublic.net*

Devilfire

Cruelest Animal

The moody opening track from these Brummie hard rockers' commanding album *Black Soul Vendetta* is also one of our favourites. Mindless denim-'n'-leather nostalgia this is not. These guys can really play, but they don't spew all their chops out without a care. Hat tips to classic heavy metal (Sabbath, Maiden, Priest…) are layered and considered. Vocals punch out above meaty but smart guitar work (twin lead lines, cool extra flourishes). Plus the chorus is *still* stuck in our head. Good signs all round.

Find out more at *www.devilfire.co.uk*

Dangereens *Streets Of Doom*

Anyone seeking a giddy, carefree reminder of the good old days (if by 'the good old days' you mean 1973 with New York Dolls, T.Rex and the Stones on heavy rotation) could do a hell of a lot worse than to check out this track from these Canadian renegade boogie maestros. Glam, distorted and sugared enough to be mega-catchy (but spiky enough to avoid actual nausea), *Streets Of Doom* is a frenetic, glitter-booted burst of decadence, dancing and dirt – all raw Duracell bunny guitars and louche vocals. They describe themselves as "The most elegantly decadent RNR unit of the 21st century", which sounds about right to us. Check out our review of their new album *Tough Luck* on page 83.

Find out more at *dangereens.bandcamp.com*

Blitzen Trapper *Dead Billie Jean*

Overlook Blitzen Trapper at your peril. Few bands do sweet, super-smart Americana (usually with a streak of darkness) as well as this Portland group do, as shown by tracks like this bittersweet Beatles-esque alt.country number from their tenth studio album *Holy Smokes Future Jokes*. Smart yet soothing music for these strange times, *Dead Billie Jean* is an inviting cocktail of rootsy warmth, absorbing lyrics (*'I was smoking dope with Lincoln in a Chrysler on the hill,'* mastermind Eric Earley sings), spaced out moments and flecks of bright sunlight. In a way their underdog vibe suits them, but we still say they deserve to be heard by as many people as possible.

Find out more at *www.blitzentrapper.net*

BLITZEN TRAPPER: JASON QUIGLEY/PRESS

Foxy Shazam

Dreamer

Remember Foxy Shazam? Back when they first emerged in the mid/late 2000s we were very taken with their glitzy, Queen-come-Darkness bravado and canyon-sized tunes. Then, after 2014's *Gonzo*, it all went rather quiet. Now they're back with a gloriously heartfelt, piano-tinkling, trumpet-blasting shot of rock'n'roll theatre, all harmonies blazing and moustaches twirled to perfection. Here's hoping there's more to come. We'll keep you posted.

Find out more at *www.foxyshazam.com*

Novatines

Honey

Raised on a bracing mix of Nirvana and Led Zeppelin, young Brit foursome Novatines continue their promising trajectory with this oomphy new single. A fine example of simple ingredients cooked properly, this short (but very sweet) rush of tearaway rock'n'roll – powered by a gloriously un-fussy dirty blues guitar hook – will leave you gagging for more. Why complicate things when the basics can be this tasty?

Find out more at *www.novatines.com*

Who Are Piston?

Meet the Midlands rockers with ammunition to burn.

Describe your sound in a sentence?
Loose, loud, rock'n'roll.

Where did you all meet?
As a band we are based in the Midlands but our singer Rob lives down south. Piston originally formed without a singer and practised for years without one. We eventually found Rob, and the rest is history! We write our music in the Midlands, record it and send it to Rob, and then get together to perform it.

Let's talk influences: who are your go-to guitar heroes as a band?
That's tough. Here goes… Wilko Johnson, The Cult's Billy Duffy, AC/DC's Angus Young, Rival Sons' Scott Holiday, and John Mayer.

Who has the best voice in rock'n'roll?
That's tough as well. Let's give you three that we like: Bon Scott, Robert Plant and the *king* – Elvis Presley!

What's one of the defining moments in Piston's career so far?
It has to be going out on tour as special guests to The Cult and Glenn Hughes last year. That said, though… we're supporting Thunder at Birmingham Resorts World Arena on Friday, May 14, 2021. That's going to be one for the books!

When gigs can finally take place again, what can people expect from a Piston show?
We promise to deliver you more energy in a rock'n'roll show than you have ever seen before! Rock'n'roll's not perfect, and neither are we, but damn we can melt your face!

What can you do besides music?
We all have trades. Rob is a tiler, Brad has his own barber shop called The Jolly Roger, kitted out like a pirate ship, Jack runs his own guitar teaching business, Stuart is a welder and Luke works in retail. We're not just pretty faces, ya know.

What's next for Piston?
We're currently writing our second album, and we plan on releasing new music in 2021. All of our shows have been moved over to 2021, so that looks really busy. We will be playing Ramblin' Man Fair 2021, supporting Thunder, and heading out on a UK tour in April supporting Bad Touch.

PISTON: ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS

Piston *Let Us Rise*

"As humans we all have to progress, and we can deal with anything together," singer Rob Angelico says of this meaty shit-kicker from Midlands rockers Piston. "We need to show love right now more than ever. The only race that matters is humanity. Let's rise, come together and become one. I'm excited to play this live and thank you for all of your support - you are awesome!"

Damn straight. Meet the band on the panel on the left.

Find out more at *www.pistonuk.com*

Electric Hydra

It Comes Alive

The members of Swedish rockers Electric Hydra initially bonded over a shared love of Kyuss, Black Sabbath, Entombed and Fu Manchu. This healthy, diverse taste in all forms of heaviness comes through in spadefuls on this hooky, head-spinning new single. "The song is about how your mind takes you to the darkest parts of your imagination," explains bassist Ellinor Andersson. Embrace the dark side, we say – it tends to be the most fun!

Find out more at *www.electric-hydra.com*

SKAM *Green Eyes*

No one could ever accuse SKAM of lacking ambition. Back in 2017 the Leicester power trio released a concept album about a time-travelling fighter pilot. Now they're back with the first taste of their forthcoming EP, and it's a proper 'all eyes on us!' rock banger. With fire in its belly and arenas in its sights, *Green Eyes* is a no-bullshit, one-two punch of fuzzy riffage and colossal melody, with the sort of Foo Fighters-y chorus that'll have you wondering why the hell they're not bigger than they currently are.
Find out more at *www.skamuk.com*

South Of Eden *The Talk*

Oh what wouldn't we give for a good, sweaty, non-socially distanced night at some rock club somewhere, losing our inhibitions and our minds to something loud and addictive…

It's riffs like those on *The Talk* that make us really miss gigs. Ohio's South Of Eden (formerly operating under the moniker Black Coffee) are the brains behind this barrage of propulsive, hip-shaking rock'n'roll complete with shades of Slash and Soundgarden. There's more to come from 'em too, so watch this space.
Find out more at *www.southofedenband.com*

This Or That?

SKAM frontman Steve Hill takes the most intimidating quiz known to man.

Beatles or Stones?
Stones.

AC/DC or Zeppelin?
AC/DC.

Gibson or Fender?
Gibson.

Hendrix or Page?
Page.

Green or Clapton?
Clapton.

Sixties or seventies music?
Seventies.

Van Halen or Guns N' Roses?
Argh, that's a hard one… Guns N' Roses! Slash is the coolest person on earth, and *Appetite For Destruction* is one of the albums that led me on the path of wanting to be a rock star.

Stadium or sweaty club?
Stadium. No! Wait! I just keep thinking about seeing AC/DC at Wembley and it was the best time of my life, It made me cry. To play? Obviously the more people the better, but these days I'd love to go to a club and see people up close.

Cigarettes or alcohol?
Alcohol.

Fine wine or cold beer?
Cold beer – real ale. SKAM doesn't drink lager.

Bourbon or tequila?
Bourbon… I think… Yeah.

Tour bus or plane?
Plane.

Book or movie?
I'm a movie man. I'm a massive *Back To The Future* fan. Once a fortnight I watch that bad boy.

Prog or punk?
Punk.

Metallica or Megadeth?
Megadeth, *yes*!

Horror or comedy?
Probably comedy, but I do enjoy getting scared.

Early bird or night owl?
I'm a night owl, absolutely.

Plant-based or plant-averse?
Ha! Plant-based.

Lover or fighter?
Lover, always. Mr Smooth.

Cats or dogs?
Cats.

Ketchup or mustard?
Mustard!

Home cooking or takeout?
I love a Chinese, but my mum's Sunday dinner is to die for, so I'd say home cooking.

Posh coffee or cuppa tea?
Cuppa tea – I'm on seven a day. I can't sleep at night, but I also cannot function in the morning until I've had a cup of tea. I'm a tea ninja.

The Jaded Hearts Club

Love's Gone Bad

Yes it's a cover, but with a distinctive personality that's piqued our attention. Previously this brigade of early-2000s guitar wavers – featuring stars of Jet, Muse, The Zutons, Blur and the Last Shadow Puppets – have reimagined songs by Marvin Gaye, the Isley Brothers and the Four Tops. Now they've revamped and rocked up Chris Clark's northern soul gem *Love's Gone Bad*, retaining the slinkiness of the original but with extra Stones-come-Zeppelin guitar beef and swagger.

Find out more at *thejadedheartsclub.tmstor.es*

Austin Gold *You Got It All*

You know what they say: it's always the quiet ones you've got to watch out for (and by 'quiet', in this instance, we mean relatively under the radar, not *actually* quiet). Austin Gold are a small band with big ideas – which also happen to be good ideas, thankfully, as *You Got It All* confirms. Mixing notes of the Foo Fighters with their bluesy Bad Company-nodding base, the Peterborough rockers' new single was built for big stages and widespread airplay. It had us hooked from the get-go.

Find out more at *www.austingold.co.uk*

AUSTIN GOLD: PAUL ENGLAND/PRESS

And Keep An Ear Out For

Tuk Smith & The Restless Hearts

2020 has screwed the plans of many a rising rock star, but you've *really* gotta feel for Tuk Smith. Following the demise of his band Biters, Smith picked himself up, produced records for a load of other bands and plotted his own solo comeback. By the start of this year the omens looked seriously promising. Early tastes of his new album – especially our favourite *Lookin' For Love (Ready For War)*, released in March – made good on that promise. He and his crew the Restless Hearts were confirmed as the support for Mötley Crüe's epic 2020 stadium tour with Def Leppard and Joan Jett, and a US tour with Airbourne was also confirmed.

And then… well, covid-19 exploded and everything got either cancelled or pushed to 2021. But Tuk is made of tough stuff, and when that solo album does finally see the light of day we'll be all over it. For now, watch this space and keep an eye on loudersound.com/classic-rock.

Check out single *Lookin' For Love (Ready For War))*

Find out more at: *www.tuksmithandtherestlesshearts.com*

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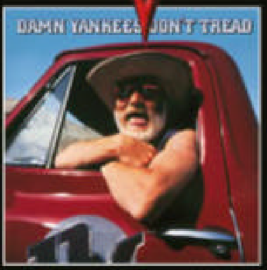
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HEAVEN
'WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD'

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JOHN NORUM - 'FACE THE TRUTH'

JOHN NORUM
'ANOTHER DESTINATION'

MOLLY HATCHETT - 'S/T'

SABU - 'S/T'

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KEEL - 'THE FINAL FRONTIER'

KEEL - 'S/T'

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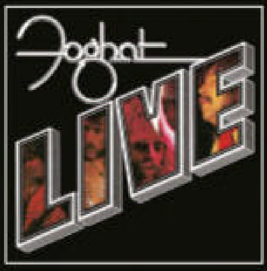
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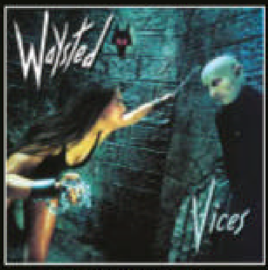
LEGS DIAMOND
'LAND OF THE GUN'

LEGS DIAMOND - 'TOWN BAD GIRL'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Issue 22 of Rock Candy Mag (October - November 2020) is now available, packed to bursting with amazing features and photos from rock's greatest era..

SO WHAT'S INSIDE ISSUE 22?

- SCORPIONS - 16 PAGES OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH THE BAND ON THE MAKING OF 1990'S CLASSIC 'CRAZY WORLD' ALBUM
- GUNS AND METALLICA TOUR 1992 - THEY SAID IT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN. MAYBE THEY WISH IT HADN'T!
- ROBIN TROWER - RAPID FIRE RECALL WITH THE GUITAR LEGEND
- FOREIGNER - THE FORGOTTEN JOHNNY EDWARDS ALBUM 'UNUSUAL HEAT'
- HOLLY KNIGHT - THE ROCK HITMAKER
- ARMORED SAINT - WHY AREN'T THEY AS BIG AS METALLICA?
- FISH - IT'S BEEN A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

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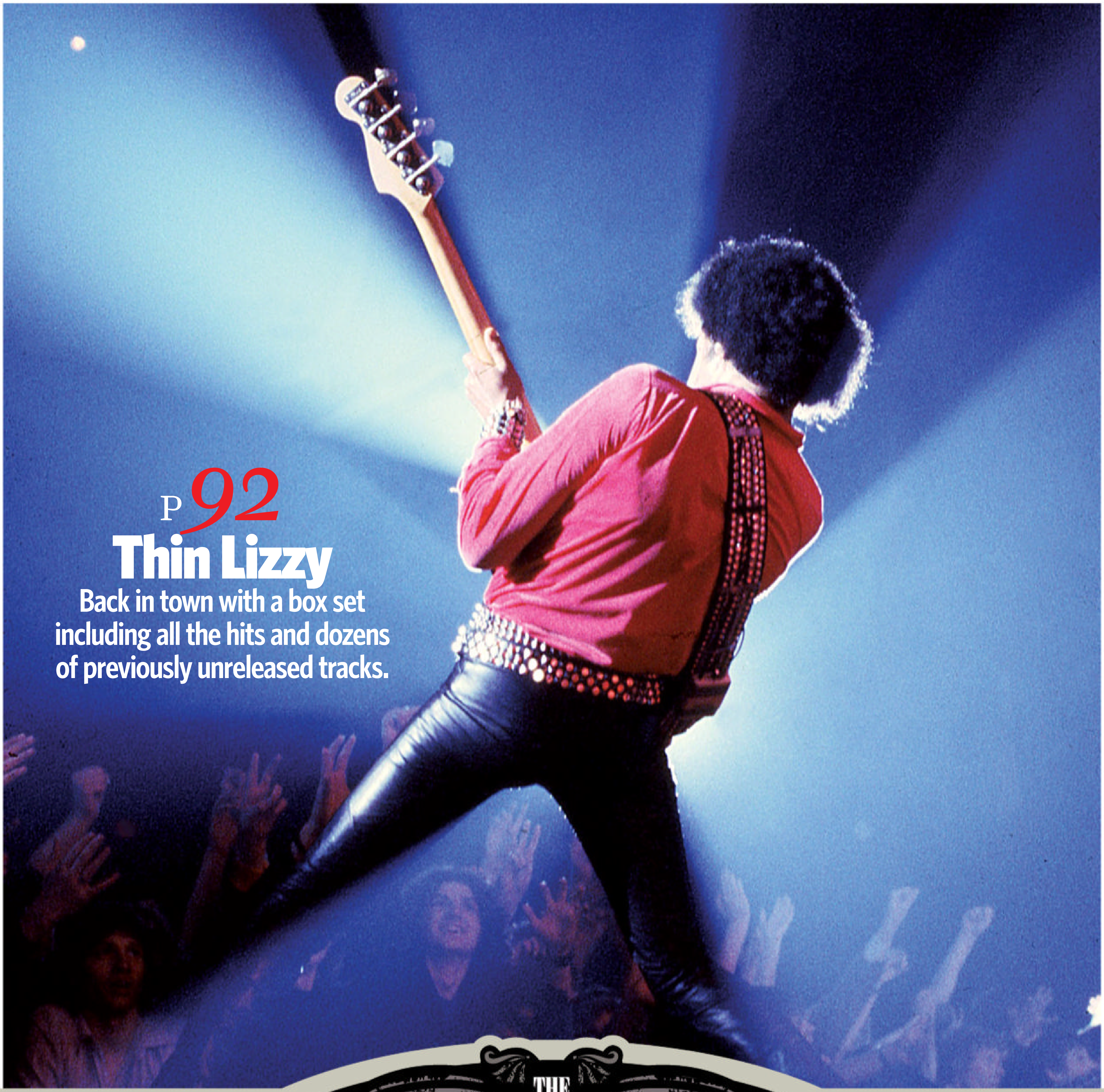

P92

Thin Lizzy

Back in town with a box set including all the hits and dozens of previously unreleased tracks.

THE HARD STUFF

The Ultimate ROCK REVIEWS Section

14 PAGES

100% ROCK

Classic Rock Ratings

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Ingredients:

P82 Albums
P90 Reissues
P94 DVDs & Books
P96 Buyer's Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam

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BARRY PLUMMER/PRESS

The Struts

Strange Days INTERSCOPE

THE STRUTS
STRANGE DAYS

An instant rock-down classic (as long as you ignore the title track and Robbie Williams).

In the realm of classic rock, authenticity is everything. There's a very thin line between homage and pastiche, particularly when it comes to pomp-rock and glam-metal, to which our cultural radars are laser-tuned. The likes of Queen, Def Leppard and AC/DC might be struck through with a rich seam of humour, but when emulating them any hint of tongue approaching cheek sets off The Darkness alarms. This genre is appreciative of tribute, but wary of mockery.

Derby's The Struts judged the balance sufficiently well to become a minor US rock sensation with their first two albums, *Everybody Wants* and *Young & Dangerous*. Their hints of a modern synthetic tone and contemporary beat are in keeping with the commercial gloss of much of 80s hair-rock, but their 2018 remix of *Body Talks* featuring Kesha revealed a more cynical crossover eye.

Upfront on this third album, written and recorded in just 10 lockdown days in LA, they bet the farm on red – a string-drenched boy-band big ballad lament called *Strange Days*, about pandemic life, featuring walking wink Robbie Williams – and, creatively, it came up deepest, darkest black.

Our advice is to forget the title track exists, start the album on the second track, the glam AC/DC *All Dressed Up (With Nowhere To Go)*, and enjoy a record of instant, solid-gold riff-rock classics. Air-punchers abound, steeped in roadhouse gristle, steamy tales of women sexed and lost, and the sort of multi-tracked chant choruses that saw a million tiger skin legging-wearing heroes narrowly escape death by pyro in 1986. Leppard's Joe Elliott and Phil Collen even show up in person on stomp rocker *I Hate How Much I Love You*. Authenticity restored.

The Struts have clearly mastered the classic rock arts, be they glam-metal (*You Love Me*) or roots Americana (the sublime, grainy *Burn It Down*, all lolloping guitars and bar-room piano). Luke Spiller has a massive monster truck voice, and guitarist Adam Slack can make his solos sound like construction workers doing Cirque de Soleil stunts from their cranes. Where they transcend homage, though, is in welcoming the influence of their guest stars: The Strokes' Albert Hammond Jr helps turn *Another Hit Of Showmanship*, a smart rewrite of the fame-as-drug metaphor, into a new-wave surf smash, while Tom Morello steals the show with a voodoo-rock turn on *Wild Child*, dripping seditious sleaze. And that's how you silence the Darkness alarms.

■■■■■■■■□□

Mark Beaumont

The Damned

The Rockfield Files EP

SEARCH & DESTROY/UMG

Original punks still buzzing.

Bands who have been going for ever often compete with themselves to see which version has the most definitive line-up, and The Damned are no exception.

For this new EP, recorded at (you guessed) Rockfield Studios in 2019, the band includes Dave Vanian, Captain Sensible and Paul Gray, missing only Rat Scabies for that Strawberries feel forever. With production by Tom Dalgety, its four songs encapsulate The Damned at their current best, being both spooky (*Black Is The Night*) and, er, about bees (*Keep 'Em Alive*).

With a sparkiness that was at times lacking on their previous album, *The Rockfield Files* is an excellent addition to the catalogue of a band who should have gone to pot about 30 years ago but are still full of vitality.

■■■■■■■■□□

David Quantick

Public Enemy

What You Gonna Do When The Grid Goes Down? DEF JAM

Still fighting the power, with help from some famous friends.

Veteran hip-hop heavyweights Public Enemy have followed an erratic, dispiriting career path in the 21st century. But their first album in 22 years for their iconic former label Def Jam is a meaty, starry affair featuring a pan-generational guest list including George Clinton, Questlove, Nas, Ice-T, Run DMC and more.

Recycling several tracks from their 2017 download-only collection *Nothing Is Quick In The Desert*, Chuck D and Flavor Flav find themselves urgently back in lockstep with the zeitgeist in an age of rage, Trump, pandemic paranoia and escalating police brutality. The boorish, sweary piledriver polemic *State Of The Union (STFU)* is the most overtly anti-Trump statement here, verbally battering America's current clown-in-chief with sledgehammer subtlety. But elsewhere a more nuanced, tender, self-referential nostalgia prevails, from the Beastie Boys-assisted *Public Enemy Number Won* to Flav's heartfelt tributes to lost comrades on *Rest In Beats*.

Between propulsive rap-metal guitar riffs and booming foghorn sermons, the killer cut here is a new collective remake of PE's immortal 1989 anthem *Fight The Power*, updated and rebooted with references to George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and the Black Lives Matter movement.

■■■■■■■■□□

Stephen Dalton

Nils Lofgren Band

Weathered CATTLE TRACK ROAD

Live album recorded pre-lockdown with E Street Band and Crazy Horse members.

If ever it felt good to listen to a live album, it's now; the memories of times that might not swing back for a while.

Weathered is red-raw but represents vividly the intimacy of the gigs supporting his previous studio album, *Blue With Lou*. There are out-takes from that record, including *Too Blue To Play*, a Dylanesque trek down the dwindling dirt paths of age, taking in the long rear view. But the set draws from older Lofgren material too, including the bourbon vintage of *Daddy Dream*, on which Tom Lofgren, Kevin McCormick and Andy Newmark get to shine. Lofgren is a chatty performer between songs, and the excellent, sweary Ringo Starr story with which he introduces *Girl In Motion* is worth the price of the album alone. Loveliest is *Tender Love*, a wistful vocal duet with Cindy Mazelle.

■■■■■■■□□□

David Stubbs

Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown

Pressure SNAKEFARM

Backed into a corner, in the fourth round the Shakedown come out fighting.

TYLER BRYANT & THE SHAKEDOWN
PRESSURE

Recorded in his basement under lockdown, with the band down to a three-piece (Bryant played bass himself), this album could have been low-key. But no. It began as one song – the upbeat *Crazy Days* – recorded in response to the pandemic flipping the world upside-down, grew into an EP, and emerged as a fully-fledged fourth album.

By turns heavy (*Pressure* and *Fuel*), bluesy (the barbed-wire slide-filled *Hitchhiker*) and funky (*Wildside*), its palette of styles is richer than on previous records. Okay, *Automatic* echoes early Aerosmith, *Misery* follows Nazareth's take on Woody Guthrie's *Vigilante Man*… but even the bluesy *Loner* and the

T Bone Burnett-style acoustic *Coastin'* sound fresh.

Three songs feature Bryant's wife Rebecca Lovell (of roots-rock duo Larkin Poe) on vocals, and Blackberry Smoke's Charlie Starr sings on *Holdin' My Breath*, but it peaks with the poignant, soul-searching beauty of *Like The Old Me*.

Bryant has truly come of age with this record.

■■■■■■■■□□

Neil Jeffries

Low Cut Connie

Private Lives

CONTENDER/MIDCITIZEN

Soul-drenched rock'n'roll with a soft centre.

Like Jerry Lee Lewis and Ben Folds before him, Low Cut Connie frontman Adam Weiner, backed by an ever-changing cast of supporting characters, has built his reputation on beating seven bells out of his long-suffering piano during their kinetic live shows. But despite a party-band reputation, there are tears of a clown soaking *Private Lives*.

Slathered in soul and taking rhythmic cues from the birth of rock'n'roll, it's a collection of portraits of all-American fuck-ups, lives that are frayed around the edges and unravelling rapidly. Tearful state-of-the-nation piano ballad *Look What They Did*, clearly influenced by Elton John, aces the present with a resigned sadness ('*Look how they built up the dream, and now they're tearing it down*'), while the beautifully vulnerable *Help Me* roots for day-to-day survival, for seeking out the light, in a cruel and indifferent world. It's this latter sense of indefatigable positivity that shines through, a sense of togetherness engendered by a celebration of classic, no-nonsense rock'n'roll.

■■■■■■■□□□

Emma Johnston

Brothers Osborne

Skeletons SPINEFARM

Bolted-on country rock'n'roll from Brothers' third album.

Part ZZ Top, part Shania Twain (that's a compliment), part good ol' boys, you can see why certain corners of the USA have taken this Maryland duo to their hearts. With their debut album *Pawn Shop* certified gold (quite a feat in 2016), they look like they should be starring in the *Miami Vice* reboot as bank robbers stealing to save their homestead.

Musically they hit all the right buttons too: rich baritones, vibrant Hammond organ, and the kind of guitar runs that touch on totems from Skynyrd to Billy Gibbons. They can do rueful country pop (*High Note*), strut and switch on a song like the showboating *Lighten Up*, and yee-haw hard in the rueful narrative that is *Back On The Bottle*, all honky-tonk, broken hearts and bad behaviour.

■■■■■■■□□□

Philip Wilding

Hawkwind Light Orchestra

Carnivorous CHERRY RED

Truncated space-rock veterans tackle the pandemic.

It stands to reason that a band as rooted in sci-fi and fantasy as Hawkwind should record an album inspired by the covid-19 outbreak during lockdown. It was originally conceived as a Dave Brock solo project, but the band's mainstay is joined by drummer Richard Chadwick, and Magnus Martin on keyboards and guitar, the lack of the full band line-up prompting the 'Light Orchestra' suffix.

With all the classic hallmarks of chugging guitars (*Dyna-mite*), synths that bleep and go 'whoosh!' (*Void Of Wasteland*) and propulsive drumming firmly in place, *Carnivorous* (an anagram of 'coronavirus') is an album that addresses very contemporary concerns. Righteous epic *The Virus* makes the case for vegetarianism, while the dystopian *Lockdown (Keep Calm)* seethes with outrage. *Windy Day*'s knees-up and the turgid pub-rock of *Modal Farm Blues* drag the album down briefly mid-flight but, those blips aside, this is Hawkwind consolidating their strengths in the here and now.

■■■■■■■□□□

Julian Marszalek

Pallbearer

Forgotten Days NUCLEAR BLAST

Arkansas outliers deliver multi-hued take on doom metal.

Doom is as old as metal itself, its parameters enshrined by Black Sabbath on the first song of their debut album and adhered to exactingly ever since. Over their three previous albums, Arkansas's Pallbearer have taken that template and subtly massaged it into new shapes.

Their fourth album takes yet more detours, but without ever losing sight of the path. Devotees of lead-heavy riffs will be spoilt by the title track and *Rites Of Passage*, and the pace never exceeds sluggish. But there's a slo-mo prog-adelic shimmer to *Silver Wing* and *Caledonia*, while *Riverbed* consciously calls back to Alice In Chains' grubbily celestial harmonies (frontman Brett Campbell's crystal-clear vocals throughout lend Pallbearer an accessibility that many of their contemporaries wilfully lack).

Trying to alter the direction of doom at this stage of the game is like attempting to perform a handbrake turn with an oil tanker, but with *Forgotten Days*, Pallbearer are at least attempting to chart a new course.

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Dave Everley

Jim Kirkpatrick

Ballad Of A Prodigal Son

US ONE

FM guitarist steps out of the shadows with confidence.

Since replacing Andy Barnett in FM 12 years ago, guitarist Jim Kirkpatrick has played a significant role in propelling the reunited band on to new career heights.

His second solo album is a rockier proposition than 2006's blues-based debut *Changed Priorities*, calling upon many associated pals from outside of the mothership, including Bernie Marsden, Quo bassist 'Rhino' Edwards, Chris Bevington and Neil Murray, plus FM alumni Steve Overland, Jem Davis and Didge Digital. *BOAPS* is a vibrant, upbeat collection. Besides being decorated with telling licks and tricks, *Ain't Goin' Down Alone*, *Gravy Train*, a good-time title track and the Allman Brothers-esque instrumental *Blue Heron Boulevard* confirm Kirkpatrick as an assured and capable lead vocalist and, above all, an accomplished writer.

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Dave Ling

ROUND-UP: **SLEAZE**

By Sleazegrinder

Dangereens: a perfect rock'n'roll record.

Dangereens

Tough Luck ALIEN SNATCH

Montreal's premier glam-slammers return with another dose of classic honky-tonkin', blouse-wearing, foot-stomping late-night action.

Influences and inspirations are fairly simple and thoroughly classic – Stones, T.Rex, Kiss, Thin Lizzy, Hanoi Rocks, The Kinks, you get the drill pretty quick - but it's all in the delivery. Dangereens swivel their hips and wet their lips with such effortless style that it's kinda jaw-dropping, really. They sound like they were fucking born playing Chuck Berry riffs and wrapping scarves around their mic stands. The songwriting chops are on full glorious display as well, with easy-driving jivers like *Hearse Driving Blonde* and *Booboo* perfectly complimenting full-on Dolls-y stompers like *Streets Of Doom* and *1003*.

If rock'n'roll's glory days are behind us, nobody told these dudes. Or if they did they just laughed in their face and ripped out another majestic solo. This one is it, man. Album of year, if you're the type who actually knows what's up. For all intents and purposes it's a perfect rock'n'roll record.

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The Cheats

Cussin' Cryin' N' Carryin' On SELF-RELEASED

Scandinavian-style glam-punk splattered liberally with the tough, blue-collar bruising you'd expect from a band from Pittsburgh. More punk than metal, they nonetheless bash their way through Crüe-meets-Backyard Babies snarlers like *Rock N' Roll* Life and *Looking So Tough* with a steely resolve that is both pleasantly hooky and thoroughly pulverizing.

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The Blam Blams

Opening Night SELF-RELEASED

I'm not sure there is a glitter revival going on - the streets are not currently flooded with eyeliner-abusing kids wearing Struts or Hammered Satin T-shirts. But if any band is gonna take bright red platform boots and excessive pomp and circumstance to the masses, it's The Blam Blams, who worship at the altar of mid-period Queen so effectively that even I'm wearing a sequined cape at this point.

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White Knuckle Rodeo

Bit By Rock N' Roll SELF-RELEASED

All-fired up riff-rock from New York that sounds thoroughly raised-on-radio, a rough-and-ready take on AC/DC, Aerosmith and Soundgarden, with piles of incendiary guitars. There's some surprisingly AOR-baiting moments here and there, but mostly it's the kind of record you put on when you plan to exceed the speed limit.

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Battered Suitcases

Wild Dogs SELF-RELEASED

Second album of eccentric, loose-limbed garage-glam from these sun-baked Phoenix punk'n'rollers. Here's the twist - and it's a good one: vocals vacillate from 70s NYC snot to bratty, authoritative spoken-word, like an amped-up Patti Smith winging it with the NY Dolls in some alternative 1996, or maybe an underground poetry slam crashed by the Muffs. Swaggering, self-assured and rocking wildly.

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Joe Bonamassa

Royal Tea PROVOGUE

Meaty, beaty, big and bouncy.

JOE BONAMASSA
ROYAL TEA
MADE IN ENGLAND

Joe Bonamassa puts out a new studio album every two years, although he has been releasing an average of two albums a year for the past decade. These include live albums, collaborations with the likes of Beth Hart and sundry side projects, the latest being his instrumental outfit the Sleep Eazys.

But it's the studio albums that feed into his live shows, and lately Bonamassa has become more astute at finding a peg on which to hang. His 2018 album *Redemption* focused on salvation in various forms. *Royal Tea* was recorded at EMI's prestigious Abbey Road Studios, something that apparently was always on his bucket list.

He co-wrote the songs with his new best friend, former Whitesnake guitarist Bernie Marsden, with additional contributions from Pete Brown (Cream's lyricist), Jools Holland and Dave Stewart. Ever-present producer Kevin Shirley then opted for a big sound that characterises the album from the outset, with a grandiose, sweeping orchestral arrangement on *When One Door Opens*, out of which Bonamassa emerges with a slow, portentous melody reminiscent of early King Crimson before abruptly crashing into a *Beck's Bolero*-style riff. During the ensuing guitar antics his pedal board gets a vigorous work-out.

Bonamassa knows what he does best and he is adept at reworking familiar traits to keep them fresh and invigorated. And there's no risk of him repeating himself while new ideas are flowing at the current rate. That's best illustrated on the album's title track, a spontaneous-sounding hard stomp inspired by media coverage of Harry 'n' Meghan's royal bust-up. His guitar veers almost subconsciously between Beck and Page, while the lyrics gamely try to make sense of it all.

His regular band are energised by the big production as well, particularly drummer Anton Fig who gets a huge, fat-but-flat sound. Meanwhile, bassist Michael Rhodes gets his moment with a wicked sludgy riff that sets up the Zepp-ish *Lookout Man*, and keyboard player Reese Wynans revels in the rhythm of *High Class Girl*, a souped-up *Green Onions*.

The album ends with *Lonely Boy*, a rockabilly break-out for which Jools Holland is probably to blame, although the band need no encouragement and Bonamassa is inspired to try a couple of Django Reinhardt riffs.

The best thing about *Royal Tea* is that every track could easily drop into Bonamassa's live show – which is more than you can say for *Redemption*.

Back on track in every sense.

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Hugh Fielder

Osees

Protean Threat CASTLE FACE

Fierce scuzz-punk anthems from busy West Coast quintet.

John Dwyer's productivity is impressive. Apart from releasing albums at roughly six-month intervals with the Oh Sees, the Californian band he's been fronting for the past couple of decades, the singer-guitarist has just released a debut from his new collective, Bent Arcana, and delivered a set of Michael Yonkers covers under his guise as Damaged Bug.

Protean Threat sees him return to the day job in breathless style. After a couple of proggish albums, this is Osees back in familiar territory (although the band name has undergone a slight change), driven by Dwyer's primal guitar and the pounding rhythms of dual drummers Dan Rincon and Paul Quattrone. *Scramble Suit II* is extreme noise terror; on *If I Had My Way* they kick up a funk-punk mambo; the psychedelic ambience of *Said The Shovel* is a weird and woozy treasure.

Thirteen songs, 40 minutes and not a moment wasted.

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Rob Hughes

Queen + Adam Lambert

Live Around The World EMI

First live album without Freddie and John.

Such was Queen's studio brilliance that a succession of stopgap live albums, including the distinctly unmagical *Live Magic*, were always black-and-white representations of a vividly colourful band.

Today things are different. The unhappy spell with Paul Rodgers and their *The Cosmos Rocks* album seem to have finished them as a recording entity, but Rodgers's hard-rocking, high-camp successor Adam Lambert is the perfect man to fill Freddie Mercury's Adidas trainers.

Taken from shows in five countries between 2014 and 2020, but mostly Sydney this February, *Live Around The World* is 17 conservatively selected hits, Mercury's *Love Kills* and *I Was Born To Love You*, plus the unnecessary audience chant *Ay Oh*. Nothing is radically overhauled, but everything sounds fresh and they ooze joy for the first time since Mercury's death. This is the sound of a couple of venerable old hounds being reinvigorated by a frisky young pup.

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John Aizlewood

Sevendust

Blood & Stone RISE

Unlucky Atlantans' thirteenth.

Many a band are described as 'survivors', but this Georgia quintet have overcome more adversity than most to make it to their quarter-century with the original line-up intact. Near-bankruptcy, addiction and divorce have regularly threatened their existence. Which might be why this new studio album has a defiant air to it. *Dying To Live* and *Blood From A Stone* are epic volleys of blazing riffage, machine-gun drums and anthemic vocal swells, but elsewhere, they're showing a few scars. Lajon Witherspoon's ever-emotive vocals cut through most strikingly on the epic lament *Nothing Left To See Here Anymore*, full of weary anger tinged with a bruised despair. Their take on Soundgarden's *The Day I Tried To Live* might highlight unfavourably Sevendust's relative lack of distinctive songwriting traits, but this album is still a very sturdy slab of 21st-century hard rock.

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Johnny Sharp

Vice Squad

Battle Of Britain LAST ROCKER

Twenty-first-century punk.

This album should be titled Battle For Britain, cos that's what it is. A full-on, no holds-barred, impassioned assault, us-versus-them, hi-octane, good-natured but ferociously angry punk setting up barricades, choosing sides, fighting the harsh fight no matter what the odds. The titles give it away: *How The Other Half Lives, Ignored To Death, Mainstream Media* (followed by *You Can't Fool All Of The People*). This is class war.

Punk never died, it simply became more focused and determined, codified and metallic. This is Vice Squad's thirteenth studio album, and if it refuses to budge from the formula, that's cos they long ago knew where the fuck they're at. Older readers will recognise

JIM HERRINGTON/PRESS

18+

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AVAXHOME -

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singer Beki Bond(age), star of countless early-80s music press front covers – she's the one with the astringent voice, passion undiminished by years.

It's over before you can blink back your tears of rage.

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Everett True

Ascension Of The Watchers

Apocrypha *DISSONANCE*

Metal maven moonlights in moody majesty.

The second album from Fear Factory frontman Burton C Bell's 'other' band arrives 12 years after the first. And it's a triumph, as Bell and Ascension Of The Watchers mainstay John Bechdel collaborate with mercurial alt.rocker Jayce Lewis with dazzling results.

Opener *Ghost Heart* is simply magnificent, the kind of haughty, melodramatic goth-rock anthem that no one seems to make any more, all bolstered by a vivid, futuristic production. *The End Is Always The Beginning* repeats the trick, Bell's sonorous baritone a curiously reassuring presence over chiming arpeggios and abstract noise. By contrast, the title track's seven languorous minutes weave through hazy post-rock marshes, a forlorn melody shrouded in neo-folk ambience, while the hazy electronic *Honoré* feeds Bell's voice through a vocoder to startling effect. The singer is clearly in his element throughout; even a surprising charming cover of Terence Trent D'Arby's *Sign Your Name* speaks of a resolute creative soul, fired up and blossoming anew, to the great delight of goths everywhere.

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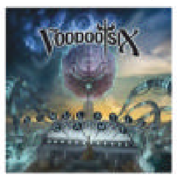
Dom Lawson

Voodoo Six

Simulation Game

EXPLORER1 MUSIC

Yet another refreshed line-up, same uncompromising attitude.



Despite the succession of line-up changes over the years, including the recent addition of guitarist Tom Gentry, Voodoo Six sound keenly energised and adventurous on this follow-up to 2017's *Make Way For The King*.

They're definitely no slouches when it comes to bare-knuckled crunch combined with melody, and *Simulation Game* is, as expected, packed with instantly memorable riffs and gritty hooks, Nik Taylor-Stoakes occasionally delivering his vocals like a vulnerable metalised Eddie Vedder, almost living the lyrics as he spits them out, the relentless *Brake* particularly chilling and poignant. Augmenting the raw riffiness we have stabs of bright strings and keyboards bringing a welcome level of sophistication to tracks like *Control, Last To Know* and *Never Beyond Repair*, the latter a relative oasis of calm amid a collection of songs that positively revel in their gut-level grooves and pace. From start to finish this is solid, powerhouse stuff, no mistake.

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Essi Berelian

Delta Spirit

What Is There *NEW WEST*

Acutely observed and passionately performed rock'n'roll.

Buzzing and invigorated after a lengthy six-year break from each other, indulging in various solo projects, Delta Spirit return with their fifth album, and it's another tight and well-honed collection of atmospheric, indie-inflected Americana. The feel is epic and cinematic, perhaps even more so now, the songs creating an imaginary soundtrack to artfully flickering home-ciné movies, achingly nostalgic yet somehow crisp and up to date; we're talking intimate tunes designed to rouse the biggest arena-sized crowds. Crashing in with the lush urgency of *The Pressure*, the songwriting is insistent and irresistible, finding its best expression in the ragged grandeur of *How Bout It*, the fractured power of *Home Again* and the radiant, wide-eyed expectation of *Lover's Heart*. And for almost perfect story-telling-as-song, look no further than *Just The Same*.

Beautiful and haunting, *What Is There* is an intricately crafted return to form.

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Essi Berelian

Jakko Jakszyk

Secrets & Lies *INSIDEOUTMUSIC*

King Crimson guitarist's solo album charts sublime to the ridiculous.

It's a rare talent that can throw their CV on the table and declare high-flying periods with bands as far apart musically as Level 42 and King Crimson. One of those rarities is guitarist and singer Jakko Jakszyk, a man unafraid of leather trews and a blouse in his grandstanding Level 42 arena years and, later still, able to make a decent fist of Bowie's *"Heroes"* live, with Crimson's Robert Fripp looking on.

Little wonder, then, that *Secrets & Lies* embraces Jakszyk's pop instinct as well as material originally written with King Crimson in mind. Level 42's Mark King and Van der Graaf Generator's Peter Hammill both contribute, on an album that bristles with pain and rejection but still thrills with melody and invention. Especially good are the lingering *The Rotters Club Is Closing Down* and the frenetic and thrilling *Separation*.

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Philip Wilding

Tommy Lee

Andro *BETTER NOISE MUSIC*

The spirit of rock'n'roll, if not the music of it.

This record will have many Mötley Crüe fans screaming in terror. Because anyone expecting *Looks That Kill* or *Kickstart My Heart* is in the wrong hallway.

Lee has never done the obvious on his solo albums, and *Andro* is no different, with hardly a trace of the hard rock with which he made his name. Instead he mixes rap, Afrobeats, electronica , pop and dance, and in a way that really works.

Let's be honest, were it not for his name there's no way this album would even be considered for review in *Classic Rock*. And apart from a respectful cover of Prince's *When You Were Mine* there's little that links this Tommy Lee to the Tommy Lee behind the Crüe kit. But that's the point. Working with rappers and like-minded vocalists, he has created music that deserves everyone to put aside prejudice and *listen*.

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Malcolm Dome

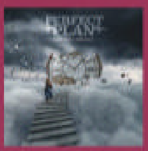
ROUND-UP: MELODIC

By Dave Ling

Perfect Plan: great singalong tunes and a smiley-faced delivery.

Perfect Plan

Time For A Miracle *FRONTIERS*



In 2018, Perfect Plan introduced themselves with one of the most promising debut albums in recent memory. Their fusion of Scandi-AOR and North American sounds from the 80s was seamless, and *All Rise* saw the Swedish quintet explode on to the melodic scene abruptly, thanks largely to the exceptional YouTube track *In And Out Of Love*. The fact that these men with greying temples had no serious pedigree made their emergence all the more remarkable.

Time For A Miracle is a little bluesier and harder hitting than its predecessor, though once again the focus is on great singalong tunes and a smiley-faced delivery, and again frontman Kent Hilli is Perfect Plan's secret weapon. When it comes to easy overall comparisons Survivor inevitably top the list, although this is a band for those weaned upon the likes of Giant, Europe and The Storm. During *Better Walk Alone*, as Hilli purrs: '*When we make love it's all understood*' – only an 'all' away from ripping off a classic line from Foreigner – it's done with a knowing smile and all is immediately forgiven.

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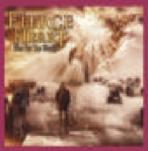
Fierce Heart

War For The World *DARK STAR*



Thirty-five years after their cult-favourite debut released through Polydor Records, Fierce Heart make an unlikely return. Rex Carroll still causes sparks to fly, but while the guitarist's signature remains omnipresent, chunky anthems such as *Built For Speed, Just Got Lucky* and *Power To Rock* are built around cool, super-memorable hooks. Dokken fans will drool over this album.

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Overland

Scandalous *ESCAPE MUSIC*

Scandalous is the fifth record from FM frontman Steve Overland in this alternative guise. Once again the Swede Tommy Denander is along for the ride as co-writer, guitarist, keyboard player and co-producer. While deeply melodic in nature, this time the pair summon a pleasing, sunny, mid-Atlantic vibe that's occasionally reminiscent of the Doobie Brothers.

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Brother Firetribe

Feel The Burn *ODYSSEY MUSIC*

With guitarist Emppu Vuorinen focusing his efforts on Nightwish, it's a new-look Brother Firetribe that release album number five. Producer Jimmy Westerland (guitarist with One Desire) places the Meat Loaf-esque tones of Pekka Heino front and centre here, and the results, notably *Chariot Of Fire, Night Drive* and the insistent *Arianne*, are quite wonderful.

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Atlas

Parallel Love *AOR HEAVEN*

Mancunian quintet Atlas heavy things up just a little with this, their second album, the follow-up to *In Pursuit Of Memory*. This approach allows guitarist Howie Little to shred slightly more than usual on the hefty *Without You*, and the lyrics explore some difficult love-related themes not common in this style of music, although for the most part a basic trad-AOR formula is not stretched too far.

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Blue Öyster Cult

The Symbol Remains *FRONTIERS*

First new album in 19 years from the ultimate cult rockers.

There's something deliciously mysterious about the prospect of a new Blue Öyster Cult album. Literally anything could happen. Here's a band that went from psychedelic proto-art-metal to hard-core, radio-baiting AOR seemingly overnight, from playing enormodomes to headlining state fairs (and more recently drive-ins) without flinching. They've gone from platinum-selling albums in the 70s to creating low-budget soundtracks for Z-grade sci-fi movies two decades later. And while all of this seems sorta flailing and maybe even a little desperate at times, they have somehow taken it all not only in their stride but also with a sense of epic adventure, like all this crazy shit was part of some grand plan.

And so we come to *The Symbol Remains* – a triumphant title if there ever was one – the band's fifteenth album, and their first studio full-length one since 2001. Original keyboard player/guitarist Allen Lanier sadly passed away in 2013, and the Bouchard brothers rhythm section is long-gone, but frontmen Eric Bloom and Buck Dharma continue to steer the ship, ensuring that BÖC will continue to sound like BÖC.

The album opens with wall-shaking bombast. *That Was Me* (lyrically, BÖC's take on *Sympathy For The Devil*) is a total skull-cracker, setting you up for what you'd imagine is a full-on metal album. However, the reggae breakdown midway through is the first twist in an album that is jam-packed with both zigs and zags. *Box In My Head* has that breezy, haunted summer vibe that reverberated through Dharma's '82 solo album, *Nightmare Epiphany* is essentially a rockabilly take on *Burnin' For You*, and *Florida Man* – a riff on the endless insane news stories about guys in Florida fighting alligators or accidentally blowing up their outhouses – is a piano-driven power-popper with a positively yacht-rock chorus.

So, obviously, Blue Öyster Cult continue to do whatever the hell they want. But the good, and perhaps surprising, news, given how long it's been since we've last heard new music from them, is that it's all good, and in places great. *The Alchemist*'s sci-fi weirdness and sinister riffage recalls the band's ferocious *Tyranny And Mutation* days, *Tainted Blood* is an irresistible bluesy 80s power-ballad that rivals prime Whitesnake for pure overblown arena-rock excess, and *Stand And Fight* is ferocious, chugging power metal. In other words, there's something for everybody on this very solid return to past glories.

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Sleazegrinder

Songhoy Blues

Optimisme *TRANSGRESSIVE*

Spectacular third album from Mali's greatest rock band.

Has any band ever captured the pure, unadulterated joy of music more perfectly than Songhoy Blues? They formed in Bamako, Mali nearly a decade ago. Having been exiled from the north of the country by a regime that, among other things, banned music, they know better than most how vital for the soul this basic human right is. Theirs are protest songs that, far from calling on the listener to take up arms, demand that you *dance*.

Optimisme, their third album, has a tougher edge than their previous releases, and opener *Badala* (which apparently means 'we don't give a fuck' in Songhay) announces their arrival with a gloriously filthy classic rock riff. Crammed with staccato rhythms and an irresistible desert-blues shuffle, the whole record fizzes with energy, the gentle, acoustic start of *Por Toi* blossoming thrillingly into a moment of intensely funky disco. *Worry*, meanwhile, is a rare English-language track, and its message – '*Don't worry, you've got to be happy/Keep fighting today, that smile will come one day*' – is presented with such clear-eyed belief that it would make even the hardest heart leap.

In a year like 2020, we all need *Optimisme* – an essential album that gets better with every listen.

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Emma Johnston

Ozric Tentacles

Space For The Earth *KSCOPE*

Sonic voyagers go back around the sun.

Even space-rockers must work with the limitations of lockdown, and Ozrics main man Ed Wynne's latest album is supposedly inspired by the Scottish landscape surrounding his Blue Bubble Studios; perhaps there is a hint of dew drops on heather underpinning six-minute opener *Stripey Clouds*. But the multi-instrumentalist is too questing to stay tethered to such geographic realities, and by *Blooperdome* we're wandering around a bazaar on Saturn's rings, and *Popscape* transports us to a droid orgy with R2-D2 on the receiving end. These wiggy synthscapes, decorated by fluttered flute and liquid shred guitar, won't surprise long-term fans, but that's no criticism. This is a fine escapist album, in desperate need of a festival at sundown.

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Henry Yates

Raven

Metal City *STEAMHAMMER/SPV*

Geordie heroes mine NWOBHM motherlode on studio album number 14.

Continuing the return-to-form reset begun with 2000's *One For All*, and following 2015's triumphant *ExtermiNation*, with *Metal City* the Newcastle nut-jobs deliver a self-produced 10-song metal master class. Much credit to new drummer Mike Heller, whose fast 'n' furious delivery has bulldozed brothers John (bass, vocals) and Mark Gallagher (guitar) closer to their early-80s *Crash Bang Wallop* motherlode.

Fans of their Neat Records output will particularly enjoy *Top Of The Mountain, Human Race, Cybertron* and mini-epic *When Worlds Collide*. Meanwhile, *The Power* (unleashing John's best crystal-menacing falsetto) and *Break* are Maiden-esque belters, while the title-track pays due homage to Tyneside as a metal hotbed. The album peaks, though, with the anthemic *Battlescarred*, an unequivocal five-minute triumph.

Musically, new ground remains conspicuously unbroken, but rest assured the old ground is given a thorough test-to-destruction. Raven emerge from the smoking ruins as a heavy metal ZZ Top: larger than life, cartoon without parody, in a class of their own.

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Neil Jeffries

Blackfield

For The Music *WARNER GERMANY*

Dissident Israeli star attempts pop crossover.

Aviv Geffen is huge in Israel: a counter-culture generational icon and, er, a judge on *The Voice*. It helps if you know this, as it suggests hidden depths to his plush, pristine pop. A track like *Summer's Gone* seems superficially bland, but its lyrics address the peace process and its ongoing frustrations. Geffen's other trump card is his long association with Steven Wilson, once a card-carrying member of

Blackfield, now a floating guest. On this, the unit's sixth album, Wilson sings lead vocals on three tracks and plays guitar on two. Avi Buffalo sings on *The Dream Of Love*, and Rik (Coldplay) Simpson is often in the room, which shows. Yet this is now at heart Geffen's project. He produces, except for *It's So Hard* where Trevor Horn presides with unusual restraint.

It's accessible music, whether it's the catchy *Under My Skin* or the swoony *Falling*, keen to reach playlists and burger bars; hard to dislike, harder to love. If it achieves Geffen's goal of advertising the "cool, unreported" side of his beloved Tel Aviv, then that may serve the greater good.

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Chris Roberts

Smith & Myers

Volume 1 & Volume 2

ATLANTIC

Half of Shinedown go acoustic.

Acoustic projects are a dime a dozen, but not many display the level of instantly accessible talent showcased on these two volumes by Zach Myers and Brent Smith, one half of Shinedown. It's the no-brainer follow-up project to 2014's two *Acoustic Sessions* EPs, and each volume comprises five originals and five fan-approved covers.

Volume 1 is possibly the stronger of the two, leading with *Not Mad Enough* – a compelling protest song written after the death of George Floyd – and Neil Young's *Rockin' In The Free World*, the tone intense and sombre. Their original tunes focusing on both personal and social issues are, unsurprisingly, immaculately crafted, while the other covers range from the eclectic (Billie Eilish's *Bad Guy*) to the classic (*Unchained Melody*), and it all meshes together seamlessly as the duo wring every last ounce of emotion out of the material.

Textbook, as they say.

Both ■■■■■■■□□□

Essi Berelian

Dyble Longdon

Between A Breath And A Breath

ENGLISH ELECTRIC

Judy weaves her silver magic.

It took former Fairport Convention singer Judy Dyble a long time to revive her musical career after the band had "unceremoniously dumped" her for Sandy Denny in 1968, not releasing her first of many solo albums until 2004. She first recorded with David Longdon, vocalist and multi-instrumentalist with prog rock band Big Big Train, in 2017.

This collaboration comprises just seven songs, but with a running time of more than 40 minutes, with music by Longdon, and words of great sensitivity, insight and optimism by Dyble that frequently touch on her varied, colourful life. The album's title is a definition of magic that was given to her when she asked for one.

The songs were written before Dyble was diagnosed with lung cancer, from which she died in July this year, giving the album an almost unbearable sense of poignancy. Beyond that, however, it remains a thing of rare, uplifting beauty.

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Hugh Fielder

Gotthard

Steve Lee: The Eyes Of A Tiger

NUCLEAR BLAST

Swiss rockers pay tribute to their fallen frontman.

On October 5, 2010, Gotthard, singer Steve Lee perished in a motorcycle accident. On stage and off, Lee was the real deal. And although the Swiss melodic hard rockers pluckily chose a replacement that sounded nothing like him, they've struggled to reach the same heights.

A decade on, after discovering these previously unheard recordings of Lee's last ever session Gotthard built an unplugged tribute album around them. From *One Life One Soul* to *Heaven* and *Lift U Up*, many of their finest tunes are reworked here in deliciously fragile form, Lee's voice sounding spookily sublime (his successor, Nic Meader, is also present in the background). An acoustic version of Survivor's *Eye Of The Tiger* rounds off an enjoyable package.

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Dave Ling

Corey Taylor

CMFT

ROADRUNNER

Slipnot singer's self-titled solo album.

For all his willingness to help out others with a guest vocal turn, it's something of a surprise that Slipknot leader Corey Taylor (known more formally as Corey Mother Fucking Taylor) has waited until now to make a solo album, despite doing solo shows for more than a decade.

Wisely, perhaps, he recorded *CMFT* in Las Vegas, and shed much of the cartoon darkness that surrounds his band in favour of a dynamic, light-on-his-feet accessibility. The result is an album packed with breathless vocals, sizzling guitars and surprisingly tight songwriting, best showcased on the rip-roaring opener *HWY 666*. Without straying too far from that template, he chances his arm on a succession of styles, invariably successfully. *Meine Lux* is pure pop, *Silverfish* and *Home* are butch ballads, and the splendidly sweary *CMFT Must Be Stopped* features London rapper Kid Bookie.

Taylor hasn't reinvented the wheel here, but he has reinvented himself.

■■■■■■■□□□

John Aizlewood

Devildriver

Dealing With Demons I

NAPALM

American metal grunts return with the first of a double dose of heaviness.

Ex-Coal Chamber frontman Dez Fafara successfully transitioned from nu-metal footsoldier to groove-metal standard bearer nearly two decades ago. His band DevilDriver have spent the interim years churning out steel-plated riffs and filling mid-afternoon festival slots without ever reaching the heights of forebears Pantera or Machine Head.

Their ninth album gives some indication why. *Dealing With Demons I* is the embodiment of mid-lane metal: immaculately performed, unrelentingly heavy and undeniably heartfelt, but untouched by greatness. *Keep Away From Me* and *Nest Of Vipers* lean into the clichés of modern metal: machine-gun drumming and Fafara's part-barked, part-yelped vocals. There's little to distinguish its 10 tracks from each other, beyond *Wishing*'s stark, startling verses.

It's a shame, because Fafara clearly believes in what he's doing, and this is far from a bad album. It's just not enough to reach beyond the faithful.

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Dave Everley

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Mad Dogs

We Are Ready To Testify GO DOWN

Pitched somewhere between the blazing hyper-sleaze of The Hellacopters and the cranked-up steroid swagger of vintage Monster Magnet, Italy's Mad Dogs are generic as hell but a helluva lotta fun. **7/10**

Brandy And The Butcher

Dick Circus RIVER MONSTER

Punk-laced South Carolina bar-room brutality propel Elizabeth Hale's sneer-lipped glitz-'n'-grime vocal assaults. CBGB-haunted action-rock with a side order of big-ass, muscle-car cowbell. **7/10**

Michael J Sheehy

Distance Is The Soul Of Beauty LIGHTNING ARCHIVE

Ex-Dream City Film Club vocalist Sheehy taps into the spirit of the Velvets' third for an engaging, seductive and reflective collection of Cave/Cash/Cohen-evoking strong words, softly spoken. **8/10**

Metz

Atlas Vending SUB POP

A pile-driving, hyper-cranked post-punk insistence defines the intensity of Toronto trio Metz's skewed dislocation of dream-pop soundscapes and next-level hardcore. Well worth (re)discovering. **8/10**

Red Spektor

Heart Of The Renewed Sun KOZMIK ARTIFACTZ

Reminiscent of the Hendrix end of Thee Hypnotics' sex-laced stoner psych, Stoke's leading fuzzed-out proto-metalling three-piece deal in an ascendent brand of heavy that's occasionally lighter than air. **8/10**

Devin Townsend

Order Of Magnitude: Empath Live Volume 1

Cheek-tonguing Zappa-of-prog-metal Townsend's touring band features two FZ alumni (Mike Kenneally and Morgen Agren). Dense, complex, relentless and nowhere near as much fun as it thinks it is. **6/10**

Ayreon

Transitus MUSIC THEORIES

Ayreon's latest cinematic epic finds Dutch auteur Arjen Lucassen tweaking his metal-gilded MO from sci-fi to gothic horror. Tom Baker narrates plummily, Steve Vai and Dee Snider head a vast cast. **7/10**

Crystal Spiders

Molt RIPPLE MUSIC

COC bassist Mike Dean's production drags a whole sub-basement of sub-woofing doom from this bottom-heavy North Carolina duo comprised of bassist vocalist Brenna Leath and drummer Tradd Yancey. The sonic equivalent of cooking meth. **7/10**

Bouncing Souls

Volume 2 PURE NOISE

Reimagined career highlights from New Jersey pop-core stalwarts. Boasting a similar ear for an adenoidal hook to Green Day, the near-acoustic Souls shine much brighter when stripped of over-worked identi-punk tropes. **7/10**

Jaded Hearts Club

You've Always Been Here HELIUM-3/INFECTIOUS/BMG

High-profile collective featuring Miles Kane, Graham Coxon, Matt Bellamy et al unite with the avowed intent of adding a contemporary rock bite to a stack of northern soul classics. Irresistible. **8/10**

Last Giant

Let The End Begin SELF-RELEASED

Portland, Oregon's Last Giant talk a good game. They claim to be influenced by "Zeppelin, Coltrane, Curtis Mayfield and Thin Lizzy", but you'd never know it from these pedestrian alt.rock Hüsker doodles. **5/10**

The Wytches

Three Mile Ditch CABLE CODE

Intrinsically disinclined to cruise along route one, here's a band with requisite ambition and ingenuity to rock down a road less travelled. Muscularly skewed fuzz co-exists alongside feather-light subtlety. A spellbynding brew. **8/10**

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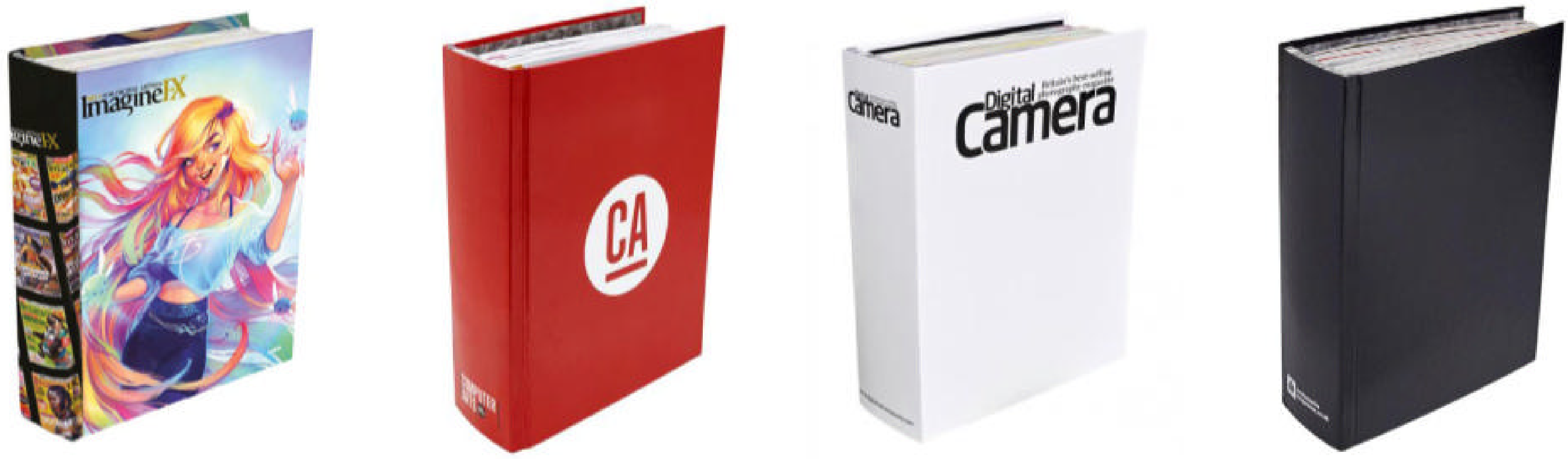
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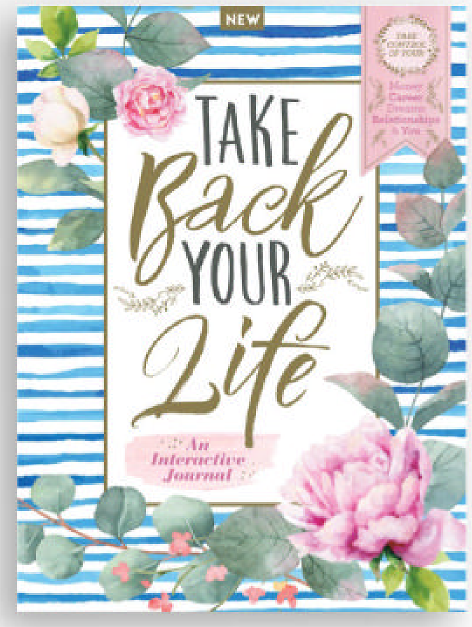
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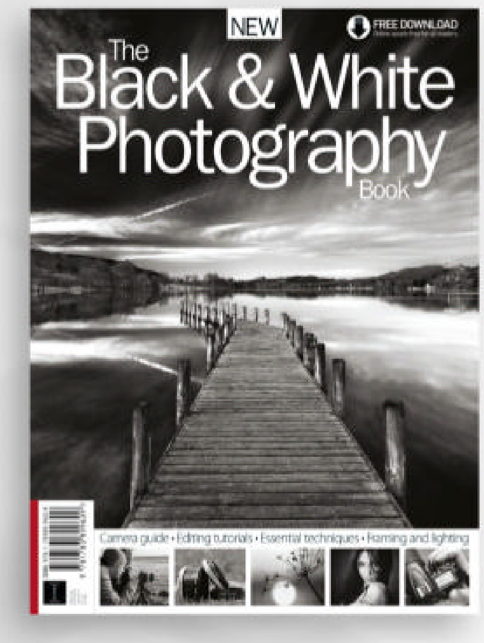
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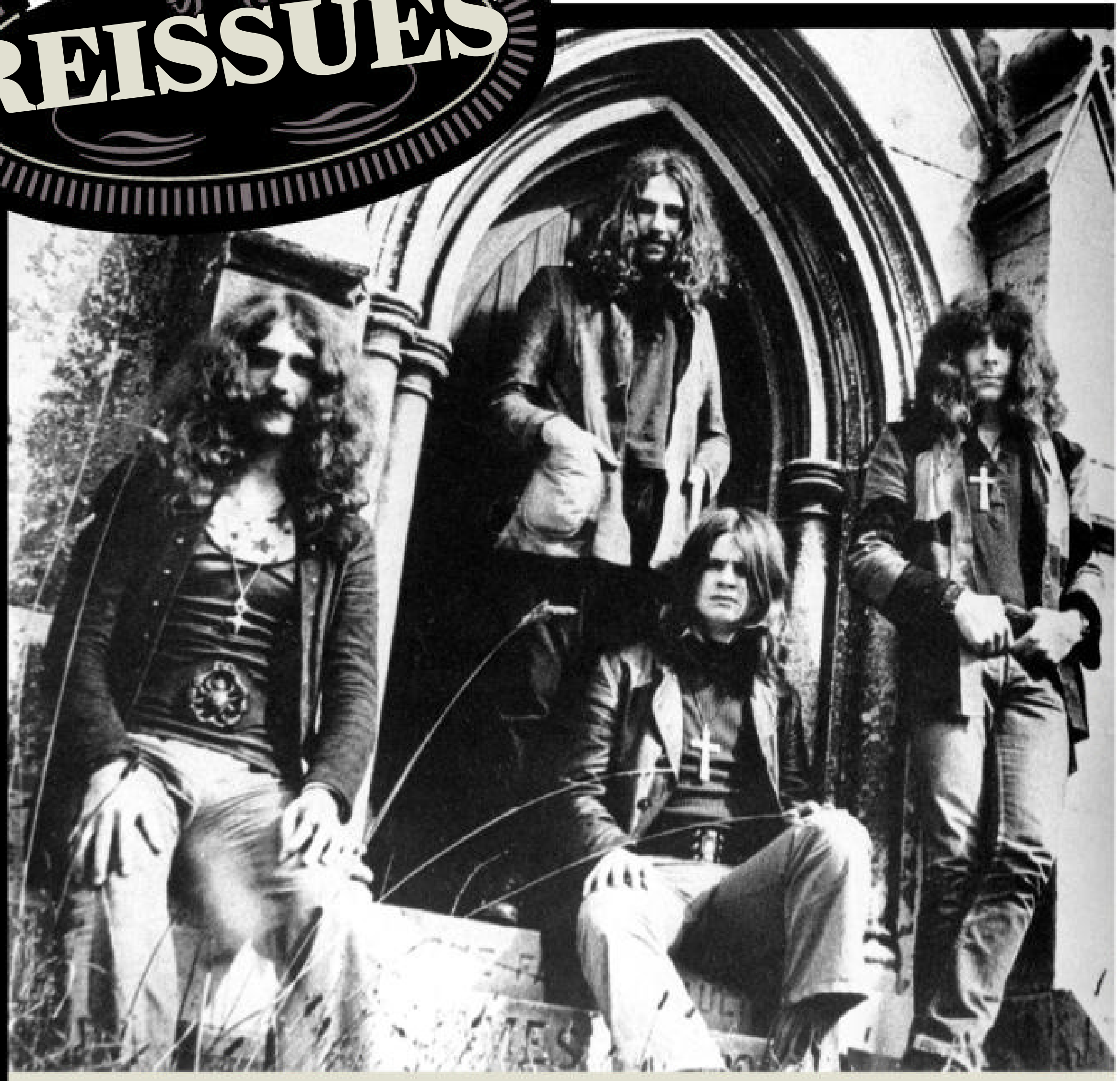

Black Sabbath

Paranoid Super Deluxe *BMG*

Fiftieth-anniversary five-LP/four-CD edition of metal landmark, expanded with live recordings.

There's a persuasive argument that complication is the enemy of great rock'n'roll. And in some ways the hard rock template that Black Sabbath moulded with their breakthrough second album *Paranoid* in 1970 backs up that notion. After all, the title track – which will still emerge first from your speaker if you ask: "Alexa, play me Black Sabbath" – was dashed off in half an hour or so.

But this was never a band relying solely on bludgeoning riffs and Beelzebub. Contrary to stereotype, Sabbath always displayed intriguing prog tendencies and an ear for the atmospheric. It's evident in the air-raid siren accompanying the funereal intro of *War Pigs*, before the dramatic one-two riff breaks in, the bewitching psychedelic reverie of *Planet Caravan*, the jumpy prog-metal time-signatures of *Hand Of Doom* and *Rat Salad*, and the lurching, shape-shifting jam of *Jack The Stripper/Fairies Wear Boots*.

Still, few members of the *Classic Rock* parish will need convincing of this band's many qualities, so why should they invest in this five-LP or four-CD reissue?

Maybe for the 1974 'Stereo Quad' mix offered on the second disc. Sure, it's been left behind by technological overhauls, and the remaster that represents the first disc here offers a noticeably clearer, crisper sound. But you might actually prefer a little vintage mud caked on your dark, cloudy 1970s classics, especially on the comfortingly retro format of vinyl, even if we can't pretend objectively that it's superior.

Then we have the two 1970 live sets included here, both previously available on bootlegs but polished up nicely for this official release. The August 1970 Casino De Montreux performance begins with the sound of feedback and the sound of nails being hammered, presumably into the stage. And the sounds continue in the same agreeably abrasive vein as the filthy fuzz of Tony Iommi's riffs are a visceral joy. The oft-mocked 'masses/masses' rhyme of the studio take of *War Pigs* is also different here, as Ozzy sings alternative lyrics, including the memorable couplet *'It's a place for all bad sinners/Watch them eating dead rats' innards'*.

The live set from a gig in Brussels in October 1970 is a little less in-your-face, but the newer songs are pacier and more assured in the hands of a band now firmly on the up. No dead rats' innards being consumed this time, but you can't have everything, right?

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Johnny Sharp

Robert Plant

Digging Deep: Subterranea

ES PARANZA

Now and then.

Robert Plant's success at creating and sustaining a solo career with none of the hysteria that enveloped his time with Led Zeppelin is quite remarkable. His intermittent (14 albums in 40 years) forays into his idiosyncratic folk-ish roots with groups of anonymous musicians has produced one of the more intriguing music catalogues. You might sometimes wish for a more accomplished musician who is able to draw more out of the singer and/or the song – a Robert Fripp, say – but that isn't Plant's way.

There have been dalliances of course, but these have been rigorously excluded from this two-CD set. In the case of Jimmy Page collaborations this is understandable, although an exception could have been made for *Tall Cool One*. The ban appears to extend to anything 'tainted' by celebrity, so there is no *Sea Of Love* by The Honeydrippers. More controversially, there's nothing from *Raising Sand*, his album with Alison Krauss, which must rank among the most significant Robert Plant albums.

Instead the five tracks from 1993's *Fate Of Nations* are the best indication of Plant's own preferences. It's his most personal album (*I Believe* is about his son) and his most political (*Great Spirit*, included here as an acoustic version). There are also four tracks from 1983's transformational *The Principle Of Moments*.

Completists will need this collection for the three unreleased tracks, including a duet with Patty Griffin (who is obviously not a celebrity) and maybe the rare *Satan Your Kingdom Must Come Down* (from the *Boss* soundtrack album).

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Hugh Fielder

Big Country

Out Beyond The River

CHERRY RED

Appropriately epic setting for a lost classic.

Despite its *The Compulsion Years Anthology* subtitle, this is basically a chunky six-disc expansion (with demos, B-sides, bonuses, contemporary live shows, two audio, one DVD) of the band's single album for the imprint, *The Buffalo Skinners*. Released at the peak of grunge as Big Country languished in the 'Where are they now?' file, you'd be forgiven for missing it, but it's certainly worthy of discovery. Dropped by Mercury in '91, the band were re-signed by original A&R man Chris Briggs to his newly launched Chrysalis subsidiary label Compulsion, and they delivered in spades.

Uniformly strong material, featuring powerful guitar interplay between Stuart Adamson and Bruce Watson, is driven home by Tony Butler's strident bass and the snare-heavy, of-its-time thud-crash of session stalwart Simon Philips.

An insanely underrated album (especially climactic closer *Chester's Farm*) and arguably the band's best.

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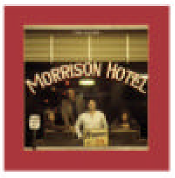
Ian Fortnam

The Doors

Morrison Hotel (50th Anniversary Edition)

RHINO

Seamy tales from a downtown LA Hard Rock Café.



Following the aftermath of Jim Morrison's Miami escapades, and the instrumental swerve The Doors took on their *The Soft Parade* album, in late 1969/early 1970 they returned to the hard blues template that became their default position.

Remastered by original engineer Bruce Botnick, this reissue features an hour-plus of out-takes that track the evolution of their Bakersfield trip to *Roadhouse Blues*, *Peace Frog* (originally a poem in Morrison's *Abortion Stories* chronicle) and the downbeat *Blue Sunday* (like *Queen Of The Highway*, an open love letter to Morrison's girlfriend Pamela Courson). The latter song gets a supper-club jazz treatment, and there are evident examples of the singer heading towards Frank Sinatra territory. Take away the 1966 rescue of *Indian Summer* and a belated but punchy *Waiting For The Sun* and it's apparent that *Morrison Hotel* was the gateway to next album *L.A. Woman*. The arrangements are vibrant and the band are always in sparkling form – the chord breaks on *You Make Me Real* are insane – while Morrison's lyrics are arguably his best, especially when he assumes a nautical role for *Land Ho!* and the sea shanty *Maggie M'Gill* where he metaphorically lashes himself to the mast and shouts down his demons. It's all

GETTY/PRESS

cracking stuff. The early Motown song *Money (That's What I Want)* and Muddy Waters's *Rock Me, Baby* add soul, and the studio chatter is worth hearing if only to catch Morrison calling out for Kentucky Fried Chicken and announcing that The Doors' next album will be called *Ride Out*.

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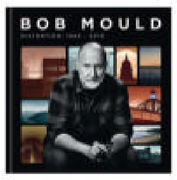
Max Bell

Bob Mould

Distortion: 1989-1995

DEMON MUSIC GROUP

Solo gems and Sugar's brilliance together in a beautiful box set of vinyl magic.



Every self-respecting alt. rock fan should have a copy of Sugar's sublime *Copper Blue* album in their collection, but frontman Bob Mould's vast back catalogue is littered with other treasures from across the decades. For completists and those after a crash course, this autumn sees the release of a huge, 24-CD anthology box set of all of his post-Hüsker Dü material, including live albums and rarities.

Even more enticing, though, is this eight-LP vinyl set, the first of four. The seven-year time span it covers, 1989-1995, was ludicrously fertile, kicking off with *Workbook*, a delicate, folk-tinged solo debut that not only stood as a reaction against the punky bluster of Hüsker Dü, but also, in *See A Little Light*, revealed what an ingenious melody writer Mould is. By the mid-90s, bands like R.E.M. had taken its blueprint to the masses. Its follow-up, *Black Sheets Of Rain*, took a heavier turn, but it's the Sugar albums here that really strike gold.

Slotting right into the gunge maelstrom thanks to their inky riffs and sometimes embittered lyrics, Sugar simultaneously stood apart, thanks to the timeless, breathtaking, pop-perfect songwriting on *Copper Blue*'s *Hoover Dam* and *If I Can't Change Your Mind*. While the follow-up EP, the taut *Beaster*, and Sugar's swansong, the rather unfocused *File Under: Easy Listening*, couldn't quite match its majesty, the latter still features some of their finest moments.

Add *Besides*, a compilation of Sugar B-sides, and *Distortion Plus*, a disc of rarities and collaborations from the time, including a duet with Throwing Muses called *Dio* that sounds like everyone involved was having a right laugh, and you have a very fine argument for putting all of your musical eggs into the same basket.

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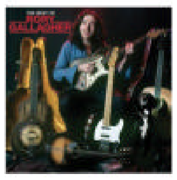
Emma Johnston

Rory Gallagher

The Best Of *UMC*

Thirty-song set in which a Rolling Stones cover is the only fresh jewel.



After a clutch of albums delivering previously unreleased Rory Gallagher material, this collection offers nothing new. It's also the fourth 'best of' in 15 years, so is hardly essential. Its one rarity, Jerry Lee Lewis's 1973 cover of the Stones' *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* on which Rory also sings, lifted from the expanded *The Session… Recorded In London With Great Artists*, fades just after The Killer adds his own vocals and as the pair of them may be about to jam.

Such carping aside, across two CDs this diligently spans the 21-year recording career of the check-shirted wizard, from four numbers by Taste (including *What's Going On* and *Catfish* as bookends, plus his first solo album version of *Sinner Boy*, played with Taste at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival), up to *Ghost Blues* from 1990's *Fresh Evidence*, Rory's last album before his death in June 1995.

Some set-list regulars are omitted, giving lesser-known studio work some limelight. Up-tempo rockers (such as *Shadow Play* and *Cruise On Out*) therefore stand as islands in a calmer sea of Gallagher's unique blues, with the mellow beauty of songs such as *I'm Not Awake Yet, Wheels Within Wheels* and *A Million Miles Away* plain to see.

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Neil Jeffries

Tears For Fears

The Seeds Of Love: Super Deluxe Edition *UMC/VIRGIN*

Reissue of category-defying grand folly/work of genius.

With 1985's world-conquering album *Songs From The Big Chair*, Roland Orzabal and Curt Smith had already proved that they were more than just another 80s synth-pop duo. The difficult third album was even more replete with inspiration, even if it did take four years, a million quid and countless sessions, producers, line-ups and shifts in direction. By the time it was released at the tail end of the decade, the only arguments were over which track should open. Reasonably, the record company fancied *The Seeds Of Love*, the euphoric, hook-heavy, psychedelic prog-soul socialist epic that confirmed Tears For Fears as the band The Beatles could have been. Yet Orzabal insisted on *Woman In Chains*, his slow-burning duet with Oleta Adams about domestic violence, featuring Phil Collins on drums. It would, he believed, surprise sceptics. The album has been doing that ever since.

Now remastered with a Steven Wilson remix (there's less era reverb), it comes with extra discs. Not just singles and B-sides but also a veritable Eden of alternative versions, demos and studio jams that reveal how the record could have gone any number of ways (Steely Dan and Little Feat were muses). The beast that became *Badman's Song* had many faces. The 80s' glorious swansong.

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Chris Roberts

Motörhead

Ace Of Spades (Deluxe Box) *BMG*

As you'd expect, this is metallic KO. Metal overload. Over the top. Overkill.

ALAN BALLARD/PRESS

This 40th anniversary reissue of Motörhead's seminal *Ace Of Spades* album comprises 73 tracks. That's 73 grizzled, glorious, gut-busting slabs of full-on rock'n'roll in the tradition of AC/DC, Hawkwind and… no, not the NWOBHM; Lemmy was always too full-on Lemmy to be tagged alongside Def Leppard and Iron Maiden. That's 73 tracks crammed full of guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke's wailing licks, Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor's thunderous drums and Lemmy's stomach-churning bass, his voice yelling: "I can't hear ya!" and *'The ace of spades'* over increasingly louder amplification, volume turned way beyond max comfort, amplifiers distended and bleeding.

Remember how Lemmy had the mic positioned six inches above his mouth, so he always had to reach up? I saw Motörhead perform at Hammersmith Odeon some time around this album's release, and he broke all four strings on his bass – opening chord.

As great as the original 1980 studio album is – and fuck, man, it is, with hit *Ace Of Spades*, *(We Are) The Road Crew*, *Jailbait* and all – you ain't lived until you've heard this box set's two double live albums taken from the Ace Up Your Sleeve tour. Demented, distorted, beautiful, blossoming… Not metal, cos Lemmy always hated that word, even though the track *Ace Of Spades* alone virtually invented thrash metal and Metallica. Listen to *Over The Top* (Belfast, December '81) – not a gnarly riff, not a note out of place. Listen to the demented vocals on *Road Crew* (Orleans, March '81), Lemmy living every single moment, creating entire mythologies in a single song.

The beautiful madness doesn't end there. There's another double album of out-takes and rare tracks including an alternative version of *Ace Of Spades* that nearly beats the original, the collaboration with Girlschool *Please Don't Touch*, of course, a 10-inch featuring previously unreleased 1980 instrumentals, a DVD of live and TV appearances, a tour programme, the Motörhead Rock Commando comic, even a set of five poker dice.

As soon as I finish listening to Girlschool covering *Bomber* and the killer instrumental demo of *Shoot You In The Back*, I'm going to go back and listen to the whole damn thing again, carving a groove in the floor with my head.

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Everett True

Thin Lizzy

Rock Legends UMC

Seven-disc box set with all the hits and 74 – yes, 74 – previously unreleased tracks.

The bootlegs have been out there for years, YouTube clips too. Thin Lizzy recordings that were never officially released. Demos of classic songs, rough takes of other tracks that missed the cut for albums. Now, in this box set 10 years in the making, the best of this stuff is collected, along with some material never previously heard outside of the band's inner circle.

Thirty-four years after the death of Lizzy's legendary frontman and leader Phil Lynott, this project has been co-curated by Scott Gorham, the guitarist who served alongside Lynott in Lizzy's glory days of the 70s and has continued to steer the modern version of the band. "It's taken a lot of detective work to track these recordings down so they can be restored," Gorham says. And restoration is key to its success. With expert remixing of the original tapes, the audio quality is on a different level to all those shonky bootlegs and the results are at times stunning.

A demo of *The Boys Are Back In Town*, the most famous of all Thin Lizzy songs, is a revelation. An alternative take, with some different lyrics, was included in the 2001 deluxe edition of the *Jailbreak* album, but the version on *Rock Legends* adds fresh insight into the workings of the band. There's a slightly looser feel in the performance, more ad-libbed lines from Lynott, and an extra minute of jamming in the outro, with sweet interplay between Gorham and Brian Robertson. It's a song that's been heard a million times, but never quite like this.

Among those tracks omitted from Lizzy albums are some genuine lost treasures, most notably *Weasel Rhapsody*, a funky instrumental as badass as *Johnny The Fox Meets Jimmy The Weed*. Also previously unreleased and included here are 15 tracks recorded live on 1980's Chinatown tour, including a great version of Lynott's solo number *Dear Miss Lonely Hearts*.

The first disc in this box is an anomaly, albeit a glorious one: essentially a greatest hits, running from *Whiskey In The Jar*, the soundtrack to countless drunken nights, to the elegiac finale *The Sun Goes Down*. And on the accompanying DVD, alongside a fine 2001 BBC documentary are performances filmed in 1976 for Rod Stewart's TV special *A Night On The Town*, with the definitive line-up of Lizzy – Lynott, Gorham, Robertson and drummer Brian Downey – knocking out *Jailbreak, Emerald, The Boys Are Back In Town* and *Rosalie*, full of attitude and a sense of their own power. The coolest rock band there ever was.

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Paul Elliott

Iron Maiden

Iron Maiden PARLOPHONE

The classic first album, on limited-edition picture disc.

April 14, 1980 was a good day to be a headbanger. Two of the greatest heavy metal albums of all time came out on that date: Judas Priest's *British Steel* and Iron Maiden's self-titled debut.

At that time Priest were major stars, Maiden the young pretenders leading the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. But if the influence of Priest was writ large in Maiden's twin-guitar attack and the screams of singer Paul Di'Anno, these upstarts from London's East End had two key elements in defining a powerful band identity: the brilliant songwriting of bassist Steve Harris and, on the album's cover, the sinister figure of Eddie that would become the band's trademark.

Forty years on, a new vinyl edition comes as a picture disc, offering the dubious pleasure of watching Eddie's snarling face spinning menacingly as it plays. And while no bonus material has been added, the original album remains as thrilling as it always was.

Harris never cared for the raw sound of it, but the energy and streetwise aggression in the band's performances is undeniable. And in their first great songs – *Running Free, Phantom Of The Opera* and the manic signature number *Iron Maiden* – a legend was born.

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Paul Elliott

Tom Petty

Wallflowers & All The Rest WARNER

Petty's Rick Rubin-produced, second solo album, as it was originally intended.

In Tom Petty's last interview before he died in 2017, he promised to return to his second solo album, 1994's *Wildflowers*. Posthumously, his wife, daughters, producer Rick Rubin and Heartbreakers Mike Campbell and Benmont Tench have honoured his wish, and it's now available as a two-CD or three-LP set, a box or a deluxe edition, the latter including a necklace.

The album itself caught Petty in a tricky place personally, where divorce and heroin addiction loomed. Professionally, he turned away from Jeff Lynne's warm productions, brought in Rubin to strip things down and Ringo Starr to guest on *To Find A Friend*, lyrically turned confessional, and delivered an intimate, hook-laden, grown-up collection that sold three million copies in the US alone.

It was planned as a 25-track double album, until Warner Bros insisted on a single. Now it's fully restored on the two-CD version, so *California, Leave Virginia Alone* and the lengthy, lovely *Love Is Blue*-inspired *Hung Up & Over* (which was included on the *She's The One* soundtrack) enhance an already vivid picture.

The box set features a collection of Petty's wholly solo home recordings, which show how subtle but effective Rubin's contributions would be, and an 11-song live set comprising most of *Wallflowers* and on which *Good To Be King* is transformed into an 11-minute epic, plus *Walls* from *She's The One*, the B-side *Girl On LSD* and *Drivin' Down To Georgia*, which hitherto surfaced only on *Live Anthology*.

There's a lot to take in, but Petty was at one of his many peaks and this is worth luxuriating in. It's surely what he would have wanted.

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John Aizlewood

John Lennon

Gimme Some Truth. The Ultimate Mixes CAPITOL/UME

Part of rock's fabric gets a brand new lustre.

Timed to celebrate Lennon's eightieth birthday (while sadly approaching the fortieth anniversary of his murder that smashed any hope of him celebrating it), this latest 'greatest hits' collection comes with the simple difference (and selling point) that these now achingly familiar songs never sounded so good.

Remixed top to tail by Paul Hicks (who sculpted *Imagine – The Ultimate Collection*), its 36 cuts were selected by Yoko and son Sean to tell John's post-Beatles story and illustrate his many facets, thus turning their eternal grief into an immaculately packaged, multi-format tribute (Deluxe including 124-page book telling the songs' stories, plus previously unseen photos and archive memorabilia).

On Yoko's direction, the high-tech respray focused on Lennon's vocals: *Cold Turkey's*

BARRY PLUMMER/PRESS

searing smack withdrawal howls; his virtuoso nuancing around *God; Stand By Me* affirmed as one of rock’s perfect vocal performances; his fixation with overdubbing complex harmonies startling on *Woman*.

Half a century after they were recorded, the first two albums’ reborn magnificence hasn’t dimmed, the aural upgrade further hot-wiring *Working Class Hero*, *Isolation*, *Jealous Guy* and the Macca-lambasting *How Do You Sleep?*. If Yoko wants to emphasise *Double Fantasy* and conclude with *Give Peace A Chance*, it’s her well-earned prerogative.

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Kris Needs

Dire Straits

The Studio Albums ’78-’91

UCM/VIRGIN

Grinder woos Strat in rock’s most celebrated odd-couple romance.

Dire Straits were always a beauty-and-beast band, Mark Knopfler’s life-ravaged deadpan croaking and growling around that jaw dropping Disney princess Strat-work. From the opening twirls of *Down To The Waterline* from their self-titled debut of 1978, the guitar was the star, and initially pub-rock veteran Knopfler simply gave it some unobtrusive country blues, dub and honky-tonk backdrops before which to preen and pirouette. Among sketches of struggling artistry in Newcastle docklands and Soho dives, that earthy debut’s stand-out *Sultans Of Swing* – a roots purist’s dream in the dizzy days of disco – was the crude base material that they would refine over the 13 years covered by this extras-free studio album box.

The vivid spark of *Lady Writer*, from 1979’s catchier second album *Communiqué*, was an augur of the melodic grandstanding and crystal-sharp storytelling that would make 1980’s *Making Movies*, home of sublime Stratford-on-Tyne heartbreaker *Romeo And Juliet*, an early career landmark. Then 1982’s *Love Over Gold* worked up the underlying atmospherics on mood-building monoliths *Private Investigations* and birth-of-a-city saga *Telegraph Road*, and 1985’s *Brothers In Arms* perfected the blend to 80s-owning effect, Knopfler’s guitar work grown so weightless on *So Far Away*, *Why Worry* and the title track that it virtually floats out of the sleeve. Discard 1991’s slick, trad-hearted after-thought *On Every Street* on purchase and you’ve got one of rock’s classiest, steadiest ascents, lightning both bottled and bruised.

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Mark Beaumont

Nickelback

All The Right Reasons (15th Anniversary Special Edition) RHINO

Marmite Canadians’ mega-selling fifth album revisited.

It’s doubtful that Nickelback would be quite so reviled in certain quarters if they hadn’t sold 50 million albums, of which this 2005 set accounted for around 18 million. Sure, their brand of polished-up post-grunge never pushed any envelopes, but for all Chad Kroeger’s leery, creepy lyrics the gutsy riffs and ear-worm hooks of *Follow You Home*, *Animal* and *The Next Contestant* are still hard to resist. *Side Of A Bullet* is another satisfyingly metallic track, and they rock harder on the 2006 live set included here.

Elsewhere, though, far from corporate grunge-lite, on songs like *Rockstar* and *Photograph* they sound uncannily like mainstream bro-country. An acoustic version of the latter tune and a couple of others are included here, strengthening the whiff of Nashville. And while their take on Queen’s *We Will Rock You* is suitably stomping, it’s anything but unpredictable.

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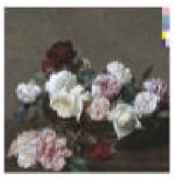
Johnny Sharp

New Order

Power, Corruption & Lies (Definitive Edition) RHINO

All-killer, no-filler expansion of band’s foundation-laying second album.



New Order’s first album *Movement* was overshadowed by not only the death of Joy Division singer Ian Curtis but also the very sound of that band. Fortunately New Order moved on, and by the time of recording follow-up *Power, Corruption & Lies* a year and a half later they had changed.

With Bernard Sumner’s distinctive lyrics and Gillian Gilbert’s keyboards to the fore, the New Order of *Power, Corruption & Lies* was a more confident record, ranging from the electronic dance bleeps of the slightly unfocused *586* and the polar Kraftwerk of *Your Silent Face* (with its famous whisper of liberation ‘*So why don’t you piss off?*’) to the rampaging gallop of *Age Of Consent* and the spooky chatter of *Ecstasy*. This was a band in a state of flux, trying out more experiments than an overbooked laboratory, and coming up with good ideas more often than not.

With its sense of outward questing rather than inward-looking doom, *Power, Corruption & Lies* was a record that couldn’t have been made by Joy Division. It also couldn’t have been made without the singles that preceded it, each one a tiny sonic workshop expanding New Order’s sound. So it’s appropriate that this ‘definitive’ (sez you) edition features the clattering, New Yorky *Confusion*, the moody, lush *Thieves Like Us* and the overwhelming student disco monster that is *Blue Monday*.

With the inclusion of John Peel sessions and in-progress versions of songs (and without any half-arsed filler), this is a brilliant album expanded to just the right length. And it don’t cost a billion quid neither.

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David Quantick

Linkin Park

Hybrid Theory WARNER BROS

Massive celebration of a mega-seller.

It’s strange to think that in 2000 this album brought nu metal to the masses. It’s closing in on 30 million copies sold worldwide, but is *Hybrid Theory* a classic?

In all honesty, when you listen to it now it’s difficult to understand just what it was about it that captured the imagination. Sure, songs like *One Step Closer* and *In The End* are hummable pop-rock, but they’re no more than a throwback to the late 80s and what the likes of Trikster were doing. The only difference is that Linkin Park had a contemporary production, one that put them alongside Korn and the rest. In 2020 it sounds decent but decidedly dated.

This reissue is available in various formats, including a deluxe box set with five CDs, three LPs, three DVDs, an 80-page book, a poster and new artwork.

One for diehards.

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Malcolm Dome

BEST OF THE REST

Other reissues out this month.

Frank Zappa

Halloween ’81 ZAPPA/UMC

Last year’s six-disc record of Zappa’s ’73 Halloween shows came with FrankenZappa mask and gloves. This sextet comes with Frankula mask and cape. A gimmick-free double-CD would have done. **6/10**

John Coltrane

Giant Steps (60th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition) RHINO

Recorded two weeks after Coltrane completed work on Miles Davis’s *Kind Of Blue*, *Giant Steps* (warmly remastered and with eye-opening extras) similarly captures the sax virtuoso’s improvisational zenith. **9/10**

Booker T & The MG’s

McLemore Avenue CRAFT

Fiftieth-anniversary vinyl edition of Steve Cropper, ‘Duck’ Dunn, Al Jackson Jr and Booker T Jones’s funky take on The Beatles’ *Abbey Road* across four lengthy instrumentals. An often overlooked treasure. **7/10**

Sigue Sigue Sputnik

Flaunt It: 4CD Deluxe CHERRY RED

Being the adventures of a young bass player attempting to contrive the ultimate product. With electro-pop and sexualised rockabilly at its core, how could SSS fail? Well, it did. Just as it had for Alan Vega. **6/10**

Bert Jansch

Crimson Moon 20th Anniversary EARTH

Expectations of a radical departure were high when Bernard Butler and Johnny Marr guested, but both fulfilled subtle, complementary roles to the master’s ever-exemplary acoustic. **7/10**

Wayne County & The Electric Chairs

The Safari Years: 4CD CAPTAIN OI!

Near definitive four-disc anthology of the LGBT pioneer’s ‘blatantly offensive’ punk era offers rarely heard extras, monitor mixes and 1979 Peel session alongside the equally rarely heard classic *Fuck Off*. **7/10**

Various

Peephole In My Brain: The British Progressive Pop Sounds Of 1971 GRAPEFRUIT

A brilliant collection from a pivotal year. Before genre fascism, the rock/pop Venn diagram intersected naturally. Here *Back Street Luv* and *Devil’s Answer* brush flares with abundant curiosity-piquing obscurities. **8/10**

Randy California & Spirit

The Euro-American Years ESOTERIC

A hugely expanded six-disc coupling of 1982’s *Euro-American* and 1983’s *Shattered Dreams* albums finds eternal underdog California in fine fingerboard-flaying form fronting yet another incarnation of Spirit. **7/10**

Various

Oi! The Albums CAPTAIN OI!

Before Punk And Disorderly came the ultimate street punk template of skinhead/terrace-focused *Oi! The Album* (here alongside five diminishing-return sequels). Rejects, Sparrer, 4-Skins, Upstarts… Reliably brutal. **7/10**

Robert Wyatt

His Greatest Misses DOMINO

Wyatt is injudiciously defined by two career-eclipsing covers: *I’m A Believer* and *Shipbuilding*. *HGM* provides an excellent opportunity to discover some astounding Wyatt originals. Eccentricity incarnate. **8/10**

Allman Brothers Band

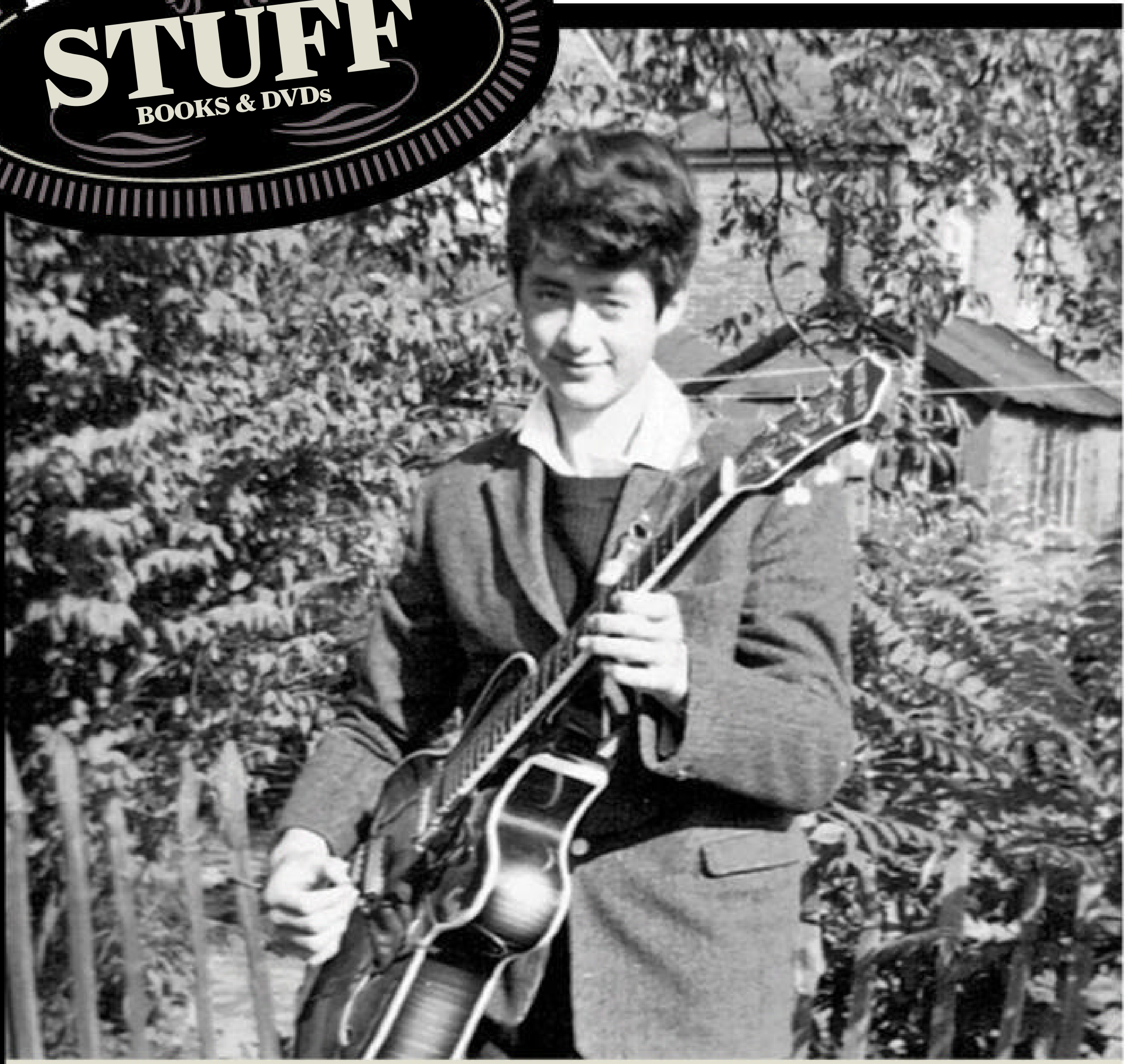
The Best Show You Never Heard: Warner Theater, Erie PA July 2005

Shortly after *Hittin’ The Note*, the Gregg, Jaimoe, two Trucks, Haynes, Burbidge and Quinones Allmans hit a particularly sweet spot in Erie with an inspired set-list. Settle back, you’ll be here for a while. **7/10**

Motörhead

On Parole RHINO

With Larry Wallis on guitar and Lucas Fox on drums, this generously expanded *On Parole* collates Motörhead’s original ’75/76 incarnation across demos for their ultimately shelved UA debut. **7/10**



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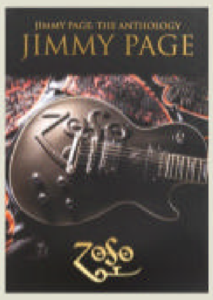
Jimmy Page: The Anthology

Jimmy Page GENESIS PUBLICATIONS



Sonic sorcerer opens Zeppelin archive to reveal how magic was made.

It all started with Bill Wyman. It was common knowledge that the erstwhile Rolling Stones bassist, always an assiduous collector of memorabilia and a meticulous archivist, had been working on 'the book' for years (decades even), so when his paving slab memoir *Rolling With The Stones* finally arrived in 2002, fans were impressed but not exactly surprised. "A shame all bands aren't so 'respectful of their legacy'," we thought. Others of us thought 'anal', but both amount to the same thing. Of course the intervening years have revealed that a surprising number of rock stars have also gathered comprehensive personal archives with which to dazzle us, either via museum shows (Bowie/Stones/Floyd) or beautifully presented, high-end books – more often than not, just in time for Christmas. Funny, that.

Perhaps miraculously, Jimmy Page had enough foresight to squirrel away a dazzling, broad-ranging collection of priceless Rosebuds from his past while conquering the planet. From chorister to elder statesman, through ace session player, The Yardbirds, Led Zeppelin and beyond, Page didn't just live life way beyond what most of us would reasonably consider to be the very maximum, he also diarised, hoarded, stored and, one imagines, kept receipts. Which for those on the outside, with their noses pressed to the glass and 45 quid in their pockets, is very good news indeed.

Those paying attention will be well aware of *Jimmy Page By Jimmy Page*, from the same publisher: a beautiful thing, but more of a broad-stroked photographic memoir, packed with your favourite Zeppelin shots and perked up with illuminating captions from the author. You could call *The Anthology JP By JP's* second volume (Jimmy does), but it's better than that. Defined by Page as a showcase for "the detail beyond the detail", it taps into the real hard-core fans' deep desire to truly sweat the small stuff. There's minutiae in abundance, details of who played what on what and when, close-ups of stage costumes, more detailed first-person biographical detail than ever before, and lots and lots of hard-core guitar porn: double-necks, triple-necks, amps and FX; Gibsons, Fenders, Parsons White string-benders… A veritable feast. Page, clearly a guitar porn connoisseur, has done a sterling job, and the photography is uniformly exquisite, but enough already…

An essential purchase.

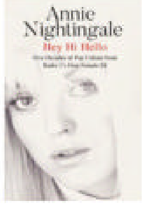
■■■■■■■■■□

Ian Fortnam

Hey Hi Hello: Five Decades Of Pop Culture From Britain's First Female DJ

Annie Nightingale WHITE RABBIT

Broadcasting icon delivers priceless insight.



The veteran DJ's third memoir is as chatty as its title suggests, but without once resorting to the academic dryness hinted at in its subtitle.

Annie Nightingale CBE (currently celebrating an unequalled half-century tenure at Radio 1) forged a career in journalism and broadcasting simply by deploying an unquenchable desire to share new music. While working as pop columnist for the *Daily Sketch*, Nightingale – who enjoyed an enduring easy rapport with The Beatles – was originally inspired to become a DJ by the off-shore pirates. When the BBC launched Radio 1 in 1967 it featured an all-male line-up. So she campaigned against their blatant bias until (in 1970) the corporation finally relented and offered her a slot. She's been there ever since. A prestigious solo gig presenting an appropriately revamped *The Old Grey Whistle Test* (Exit Harris. Enter punk) followed.

Hey Hi Hello is packed with excellent anecdotes; relaxed, revealing interviews with Marc Bolan ("I've become a teenybop idol and I enjoy that"), Keith Moon ("I knocked out my front teeth and slipped on a piece of marzipan") and Bob Marley ("I was in America and I had a vision of Haile Selassie"); dispatches from LA riots, Scream central and Ian Dury's Catshit Mansions. It's a pacy, engaging, funny and illuminating joy from cover to cover. A bit like going down the pub with the most interesting person you're ever likely to meet. And who wouldn't want that?

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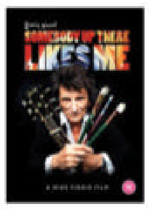
Ian Fortnam

Ronnie Wood

Somebody Up There Likes Me EAGLE ROCK

Some guys have all the luck.



Who wouldn't love to be Woody: fun-loving guitarist in the world's greatest rock band for 45 years (after 10 years dreaming of it), extraordinarily talented musician and painter, lung cancer survivor after 54 years hard smoking (including rampant freebasing), now enjoying domestic bliss with beautiful wife Sally and his kids?

Now 73, Ronnie is first to admit he's led a charmed life in this warmly intimate documentary that, even at 70 minutes, is over too soon, some things inevitably skipped or skimped; there could've been more Ronnie Lane instead of surreal footage of Peter Grant with Malcolm McLaren because he could've joined Led Zeppelin. Interviewees include fellow Stones, Sally, Rod Stewart, and Imelda May from his solo side project. Along with Birds, Jeff Beck, Faces, Stones and New Barbarians footage, Ronnie is frequently captured home alone, painting or playing, including a poignant *Breathe On Me*.

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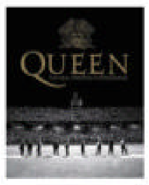
Kris Needs

Queen: The Neal Preston Photographs

Neal Preston REEL ART PRESS

Superstar photographs of a superstar band.



Every great rock'n'roll band has a great rock'n'roll photographer. Queen had two. The first was Mick Rock, who forever imprinted the image of the young group in their Zandra Rhodes splendour in the public's mind. The second was Neal Preston, who hopped on their tour bus in 1977 and stayed for the next nine years.

This visually opulent book presents Preston's iconic photos of the band, from 1977's *News Of The World* tour onwards. There are stellar images of epic live shows and off-stage high jinks, of vast crowds and empty arenas. He captures the mania of their early 80s South American tours, with phalanxes of police bodyguards and a cameo from a passing Diego Maradona. He has a unique view of the massive Live Aid and Knebworth shows too: on stage, capturing band and vast crowd in sync in a way that rarely happens any more.

For all their presence in performance, Queen were strangely unknowable as people. Preston doesn't strip away the enigma, but he does show more of the real men at the heart of it than anyone else could: Freddie Mercury smiling shyly at the camera, Brian May cracking his serious facade in a Venetian mask, John Deacon doing whatever John Deacon does. On that front alone it's worth a million biopics.

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Dave Everley

Michael Des Barres: Who Do You Want Me To Be?

Dir: Josh Weinstein RUGGED

Another cult documentary beckons.

Coming from English aristocracy, with a disgraced junkie father and a schizophrenic stripper mother might help explain why Michael Des Barres, despite flying the required looks, front and charisma, failed to clinch the rock stardom he craved as a former actor leading 70s rockers Silverhead then Detective, although rampant cocaine abuse did him no favours.

Even the Chequered Past supergroup with Steve Jones and Blondie's rhythm section stalled before, now sober, Des Barres's career peaked replacing Robert Palmer in Power Station, playing Live Aid, before the failure of his ensuing solo career led to being a Hollywood gigolo and TV shows such as *MacGyver*.

Ironically, many know Des Barres through groupie author ex-wife Pamela, who joins Jones, Andy Taylor and Steven Van Zandt singing his praises, along with its eloquently narcissistic subject, ego intact with self-deprecating humour, making his long-awaited day in the sun an enjoyable, occasionally jaw-dropping romp.

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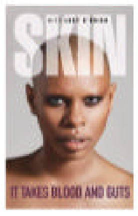
Kris Needs

It Takes Blood And Guts

Skin with Lucy O'Brien

SIMON AND SCHUSTER

The Skunk Anansie singer's account is as uncompromising as you'd expect.



"Yes, it's political," Skin quotes fan Billy Bragg as saying. "Everything's fucking political." Boom! She name-drops with casual brilliance – hanging out with Nina Simone, Michael Jackson, Nelson Mandela, Courtney Love. She is not scared to speak truth to power. She confronts her assailants head-on; the story of Skunk Anansie and her gestation as a fearless frontperson turns on the pivotal moment she confronts a stalker – one the police had been unable to shield her from – in the street and makes him run from her. She is not scared to sing her own praises. There again, who else was going to, of a black gay woman from Brixton, more radical and emotionally charged than any around?

Skin tells the story of her sexuality and the rise and breakup of her band with unflinching gaze – calling out John Lydon for refusing to condemn Sex Pistols fans Sieg Heiling Skunk Anansie on their 1996 Australian support tour; talking candidly about the downside of hedonism and alcohol abuse; waxing lyrical about London's Camden Market in the band's early days; headlining Glastonbury.

A highly individual account of a highly individual style icon, trail blazer and race/gender myth-buster.

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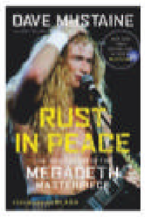
Everett True

Dave Mustaine With Joel Selvin

Rust In Peace: The Inside Story Of The Megadeth Masterpiece HACHETTE

Megadeth mainman's bonkers tale of a classic album.



For many, 1990's *Rust In Peace* album is Megadeth's finest work. But when you read this riveting behind-the-scenes-story, it's difficult to believe the record ever got made.

The book features contributions from a lot of people who were involved to varying degrees with the way *Rust In Peace* came together. And the picture painted is of a band who were hurtling into oblivion, thanks to addiction problems, before being pulled together. You sense the exasperation at times as certain members of Megadeth – notably Mustaine and bassist David Ellefson – seemed to be dragged, much against their will, into rehab.

There's a brutal honesty, suggesting the album was an artistic and commercial triumph despite the musicians at its core.

A well-written commentary on the dishevelled state of one of metal's most iconic bands during perhaps their most celebrated period.

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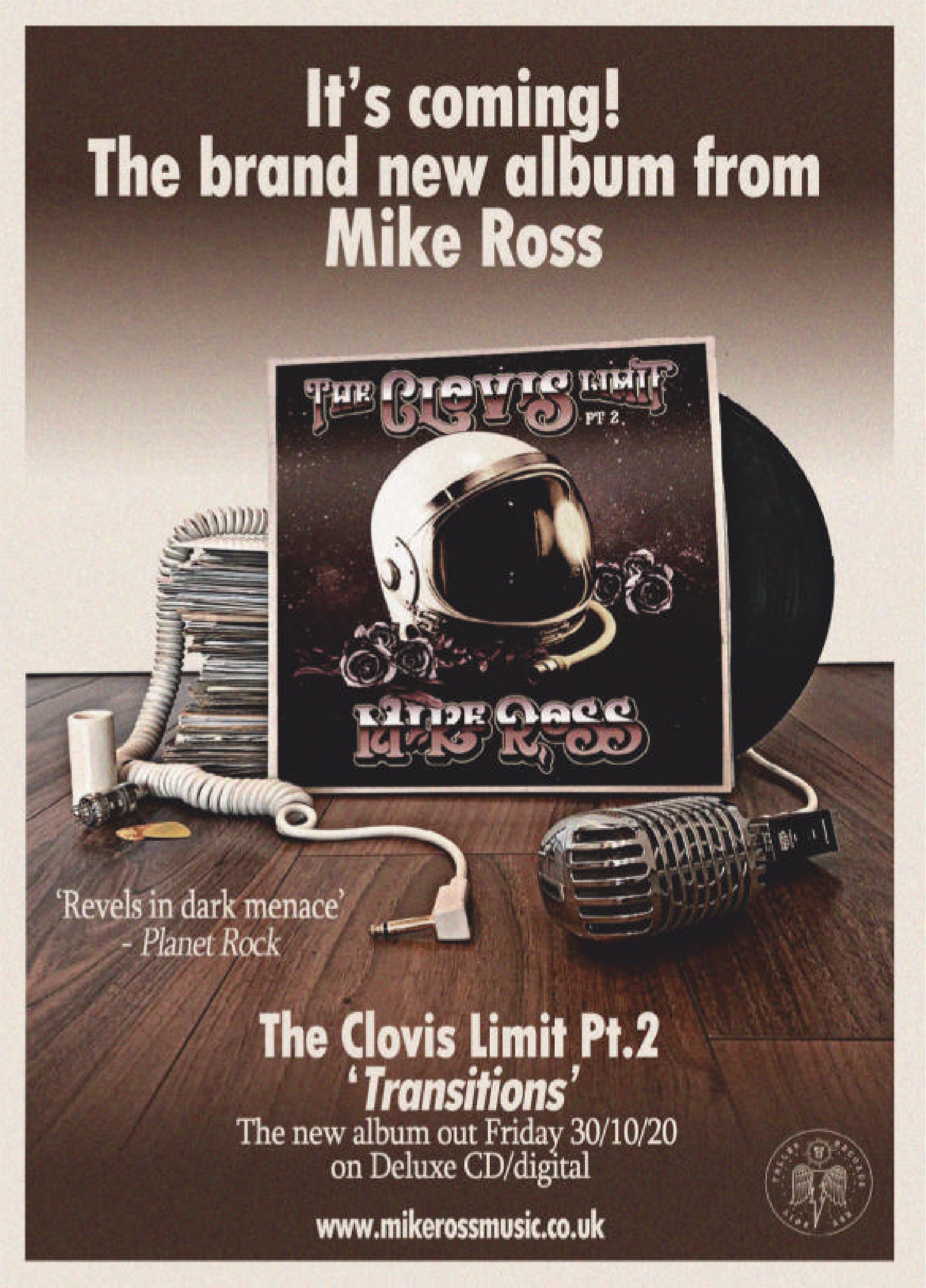
Malcolm Dome


It's coming!
The brand new album from
Mike Ross

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"Uncompromising...reaching to days when rock protested norms" - Howard Johnson ROCK CANDY Mag

"A music filled journey that you'll want to revisit time and time again". Ian Johnson FIREWORKS mag

"A great electronic driven musical variety...songs, keyboard work, vocals shine..." Warren Kurtz GOLDMINE

"REALLY cool. Pulls no punches and lets the music take you where it bloody well pleases." - Erik Thompson SWEDEN ROCK

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With their 1979 album *At Budokan*, Cheap Trick encapsulated what most think of as power-pop.

Power-pop

The cheeky little cousin of pop-rock, it's one of rock's most accessible genres, but it's not so easy to define.

Crow-barred in somewhere between pop-rock and post-punk, you'll have the devil's own job trying to nail power-pop down. Was it present in the early 70s cheery cheese of Raspberries and The Shoes? Did it begin with the glorious Big Star? Or perhaps Cheap Trick cooked it up in a toe-tapping moment of cheeky hilarity? Maybe it only really started with the new wave of big bang, heralded in by thos clever-dick college boys with severe side partings and too-tight jackets, The Cars? For the 'power' bit, do you include the Buzzcocks? Does the 'pop' part reach as far as Blondie? It's all anybody's guess. The Strokes might claim to be power-pop revivalists, but whose music are they reviving – The Knack? The Vibrators? 20/20?

Power-pop is a genre in which those at one end might have absolutely bugger all in common with those at the other. It's the nutty, speedy little cousin to pop-rock and pop-metal, the one who shows up reluctantly at family gatherings and then stands in the corner bobbing his head to whatever's playing on his headphones.

But, wait up, the little fella still has plenty to offer the discerning listener – especially those prepared to blur the edges of strict musical pigeon-holing in search of unfileable hidden gems. For collectors and cultists, obscurists and obsessives, power-pop is the gift that keeps on giving. And unlike most other genres it's one that has its roots in the 70s rather than in preceding decades.

The term itself is said to have been coined by Pete Townshend in 1967 ("Power-pop is what we play"), although it wasn't a label that stuck to The Who. Instead it was to be applied to emergent bands such as Badfinger, who began as protégés of Paul McCartney but got heavier and riffier – *No Matter What*, from their first album *No Dice*, could well be considered a genre definer. Their 1971 album *Straight Up* – which could also have easily made this list – co-produced by George Harrison and Todd Rundgren, was a power-pop landmark too.

Rundgren was among those who did run with the baton, accompanied by Big Star, Raspberries, the Flamin' Groovies and Dwight Twilley. Cheap Trick encapsulated what most think of as power-pop with their 1979 album *At Budokan*, and The Cars and Rick Springfield broke through around the same time.

By the time Buzzcocks' Pete Shelley wrote *Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've)*, the gates were open – new wave, punk, post-punk, college rock… they would all draw on the 70s power-pop sound.

Jon Hotten

Essential Classics

Cheap Trick
at Budokan

Cheap Trick

At Budokan *1979*

Cheap Trick's wondrous take on power-pop was one of shimmering, metal-sensible melodies and an outstanding vocalist in Robin Zander. The band had released a couple of studio albums by the time they taped this show in 1978 in Tokyo, but it was this blissful, blissed-out seminal live record that gave them their breakthrough. And it made the venue almost as famous as it made the band.

Often drowned out by the manic crowd, *At Budokan* perfectly caught the thrill of *I Want You To Want Me, Ain't That A Shame* and *Look Out*, and Cheap Trick never looked back.

ALSO TRY Cheap Trick, *Dream Police*, 1979

2 COMPLETE ALBUMS ON 1 CD
BIG STAR
#1 Record
Radio City

Big Star

No.1 Record/Radio City *1992*

Built around the partnership of guitarists/singers Chris Bell and Alex Chilton, Big Star made three albums in the 70s: 1972's *#1 Record* and 1974's *Radio City*, both included on this double-pack, and *Third/Sister Lovers*, released four years after they broke up. Chilton is generally credited with the melancholic regret of the likes of *Ballad of El Goodo*, and Bell with the purer pop of *September Gurls*. But it's the partnership that was key – one cut short in '78 when Bell died in a car crash.

Big Star reunited in '93, with Chilton backed by some Posies, and released a new album, *In Space*, in 2005. Sadly, Chilton died in 2010.

ALSO TRY Big Star, *Third/Sister Lovers* 1978

GETTY

Superior The albums that built the genre

Todd Rundgren
Something/Anything?

Todd Rundgren

Something/Anything *1972*

A musical polymath, Rundgren could never be restrained by genre, and his music ran the gamut from straight pop to prog. *Something/Anything*, a tour de force of invention on which Rundgren played every instrument, fitted as much into power-pop as anywhere. While the sheer diversity of this double set smacked of self-indulgence, sparkling tunes such as *I Saw The Light* and *Hello It's Me* overruled most objections.

Big Star later covered *Slut*, and some of the tracks appeared on the soundtrack to the 2000 film *Almost Famous*.

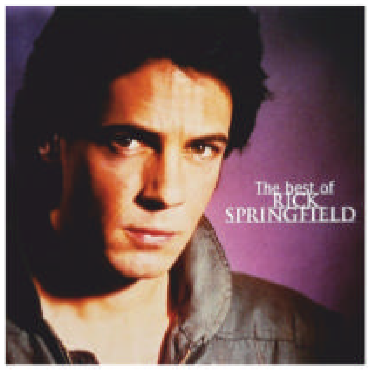
ALSO TRY Todd Rundgren, *The Hermit Of Mink Hollow*, 1978

The Cars

The Cars *1978*

While The Cars had their biggest impact in '84, with the *Heartbeat City* album and the downbeat ballad *Drive*, they were already well established as a new-wave phenomenon. This debut album perfectly summarised their world view. Punk was almost played out, but much of its rasp still appealed, especially when allied to cleverer songs. The album's two big hits – *My Best Friend's Girl* and *Just What I Needed* – were peachy examples of The Cars' gift for succinct tunes and droll delivery. Bravely, they played with virtuosity in an era when that was severely frowned upon.

ALSO TRY The Cars, *Heartbeat City*, 1984



Rick Springfield

The Best Of *1999*

Despite being an Australian, Springfield became the face of a particular kind of US power-pop. Frothier than most, he still had enough chops to ensure some enduring appeal.

An unashamed, pretty, boy-next-door who would become a noted soap actor in *General Hospital*, Springfield straddled the 70s and 80s, shrewdly exploiting the tiny fan base his TV work created. This *Best Of* rounds up a career that gave him the classic power-pop hit *Jessie's Girl*, plus a stack of throwaway tunes such as *Don't Talk To Strangers* and *Calling All Girls*. You get the idea.

ALSO TRY Rick Springfield, *Working Class Dog*, 1981

NO DICE
BADFINGER

Badfinger

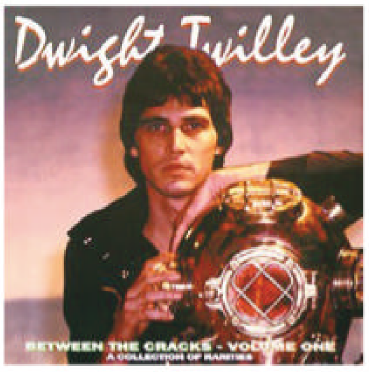
No Dice *1970*

Formed by Swansea's Pete Ham and scouser Tom Evans, Badfinger (a discarded title for The Beatles' *With A Little Help From My Friends*) signed to The Beatles' Apple Records and released *No Dice* in 1970. Raw by later standards, it had all their best songs. *Without You*, was later covered by Harry Nilsson, among others, and *No Matter What* still gets radio play.

Millions of dollars evaporated from the band's bank account in '74, sinking them and the label. The subsequent debts, bickering and law suits eventually led both Ham and Evans to suicide.

ALSO TRY Badfinger, *Straight Up*, 1971

Good Worth exploring



Dwight Twilley

Between The Cracks: Volume 1 *2004*

Hailed as 'the Godfather of new wave' (although that's probably a bit strong), Dwight Twilley did have a blistering take on pop-rock. His first, and best-known, hit, *I'm On Fire*, looked sure to break him, but the usual catalogue of music business nightmares knifed Twilley commercially before he even began.

He remains a cultist's delight, and this grab-bag of stuff that never found a home, much of it recorded 'between deals', is a good one, with searing pop music such as *Black Eyes*, *Don't You Love Her* and strong ballads *Lullaby* and *Oh Carrie*.

ALSO TRY Dwight Twilley, *Sincerely*, 1976

Raspberries
GREATEST

Raspberries

Greatest *2005*

Raspberries had come and gone by 1974 but their influence continued to reverberate, especially with Cheap Trick and later R.E.M. and Redd Kross. Lead singer Eric Carmen may now be best-known for his soppy solo ballad *All By Myself*, but Raspberries produced much more potent pop, as this excellent 2005 compilation shows. The Top 5 hit *Go All The Way* is a pure bubblegum joy, while later songs such as *Tonight* and *I'm A Rocker* show that the band had taken on board some 60s Brit influences of their own, particularly the likes of The Who and the Small Faces.

A neat period album.

ALSO TRY Raspberries, *Fresh*, 1972

FLAMIN GROOVIES
Groovies' Greatest Grooves

Flamin' Groovies

Groovies' Greatest Grooves *1996*

Their flame was somewhat slow-burning – Flamin' Groovies formed in 1965, fiddling about with standard Beatles/Stones-inspired rock'n'roll – but it wasn't until their 1976 union with co-producer Dave Edmunds that their own brand of power-pop got out of the blocks. Their best-known song, *Shake Some Action*, was raw enough to make plenty of punk compilations in the years that followed. This 25-track compilation album takes in much of their career, but with a strong focus on that mid-70s heyday. Idiosyncratic, sure, but a whole heap of fun too.

ALSO TRY Flamin' Groovies, *Shake Some Action*, 1976

Blondie

Blondie *1976*

Blondie have probably transcended every genre they've been in, with the exception of the catch-all pop. Yet their genesis coincided with punks, rooting them securely in the power-pop/new wave movement.

Built around the glacial Debbie Harry – a fantasy figure to every teenage boy in the western world – *Rip Her To Shreds* was a provocative gem. This 1976 debut album mixed bubblegum pop with garage rock, and Harry crossed over in a way that Patti Smith and Chrissie Hyde didn't. The hints of reggae, rap and synth-pop were later exploited to full effect on 1978's *Parallel Lines*.

ALSO TRY Blondie, *Plastic Letters*, 1977

Essential Playlist

Big Star
September Gurls

Big Star
Back Of A Car

Raspberries
Go All The Way

Raspberries
I'm A Rocker

The Knack
My Sharona

The Cars
My Best Friend's Girl

The Cars
Just What I Needed

Dwight Twilley
I'm On Fire

Rick Springfield
Jessie's Girl

The Buzzcocks
Ever Fallen In Love

Blondie
X Offender

Cheap Trick
I Want You To Want Me

Cheap Trick
Surrender

Flamin' Groovies
Shake Some Action

Badfinger
No Matter What

Badfinger
Baby Blue

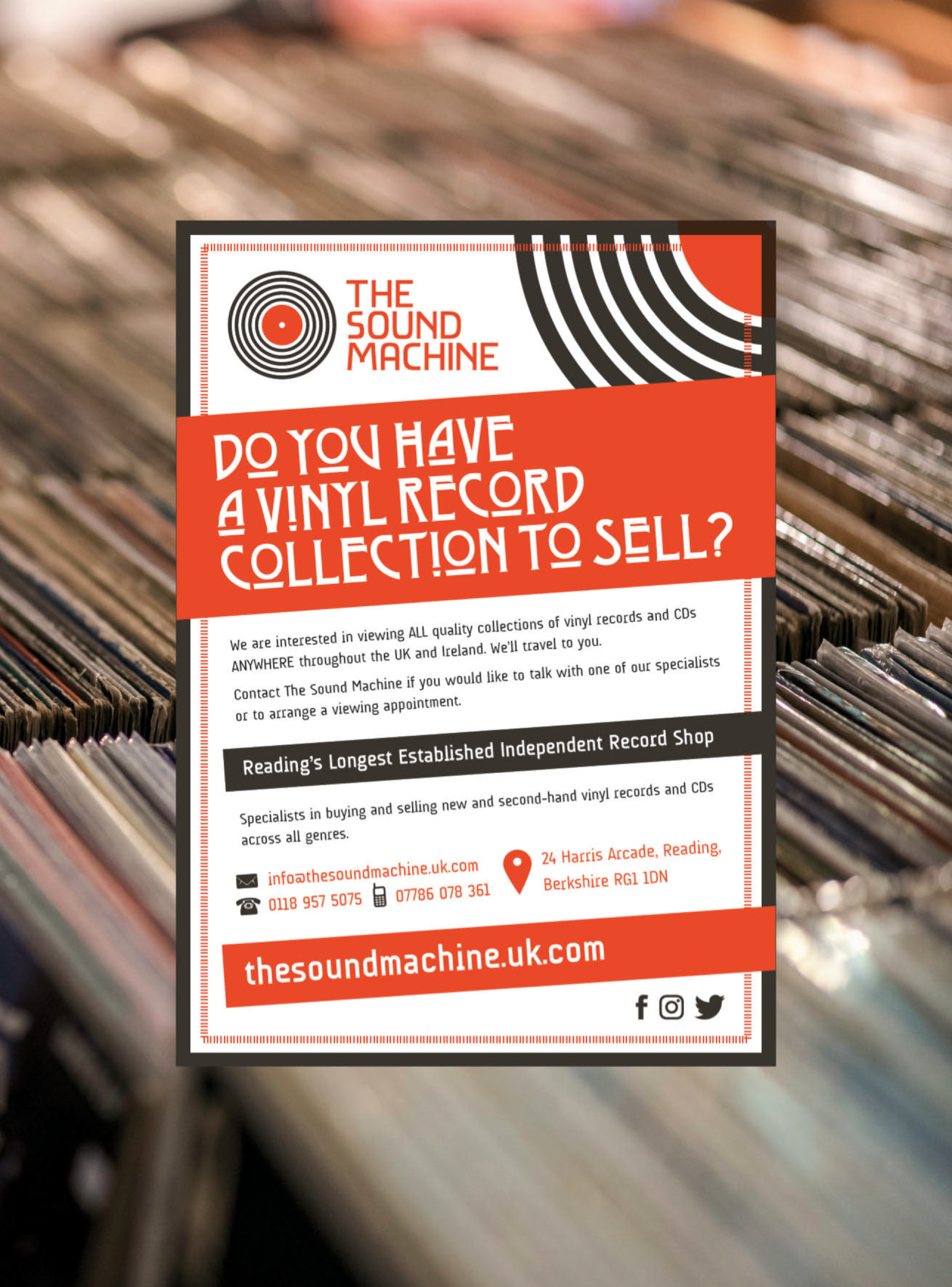
Nick Drake
Northern Sky

Todd Rundgren
Slut

Todd Rundgren
I Saw The Light

20/20
Yellow Pills

Shoes
Too Late



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Tour Dates

10CC

Aberdeen	Music Hall	Apr 4
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 5
Perth	Concert Hall	Apr 6
Northampton	Derngate Theatre	Apr 9
Rhyl	Pavilion	Apr 10
Victoria	Hall	Apr 11
Carlisle	Sands Centre	Apr 13
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 14
Halifax	Victoria Theatre	Apr 15
Hull	City Hall	Apr 16
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Apr 18
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Apr 19
Buxton	Opera House	Apr 20
Margate	Winter Gardens	Apr 22
Salisbury	City Hall	Apr 23
Colchester	Charter Hall	Apr 24
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 26
Reading	Hexagon	Apr 27
High Wycombe	Swan Theatre	Apr 28
Croydon	Fairfield Hall	Apr 29
Weymouth	Pavilion	Apr 30
Stevenage	Concert Hall	May 2
Dartford	Orchard Theatre	May 3
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	May 4

2000 TREES FESTIVAL

JIMMY EAT WORLD, MORE

Cheltenham	Upcote Farm	Jul 8-10

AEROSMITH, RIVAL SONS

London	O2 Arena	Jun 23
Manchester	Arena	Jun 29

BAD TOUCH, PISTON

Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Apr 7
Newcastle	The Cluny	Apr 8
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Apr 9
Dundee	Beat Generator	Apr 10
Manchester	Bread Shed	Apr 12
Leeds	Key Club	Apr 13
London	Islington Academy 2	Apr 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 15
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 16
Gravesend	Red Lion	Apr 17
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Apr 18
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Apr 19
Newport	The Patriot	Apr 20
Exeter	The Tavern	Apr 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 23

Recommended

JEFF BECK

Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 21
York	Barbican	Apr 22
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 23
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 25
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 26
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 27
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Apr 30
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 1, 2

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

BIFFY CLYRO

Liverpool	Mountford Hall	Apr 11
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 12
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 13
Sheffield	Academy	Apr 15
Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 16
Bristol	Academy	Apr 17

BLACK DEER FESTIVAL

SAVING GRACE FEATURING ROBERT PLANT & SUZI DIAN, WILKO, THE WATERBOYS, MORE

Kent	Eridge Park	Jun 18-20

BLACK FOXXES

Exeter	Cavern	Mar 2
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Mar 3
Sheffield	Academy 2	Mar 4
Liverpool	Arts Club	Mar 6
Edinburgh	Mash House	Mar 7
York	Fulford Arms	Mar 8
Hull	Adelphi	Mar 9
Leicester	Academy 2	Mar 11
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Mar 12
St Albans	The Horn	Mar 14
Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Mar 15
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Mar 15
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Mar 17

BLACK STONE CHERRY, KRIS BARRAS BAND (2021)

Bristol	Academy	Sep 9
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 10
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Sep 11
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 13
Leeds	Academy	Sep 14
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Sep 17
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Sep 18
Newcastle	Academy	Sep 20
Liverpool	Academy	Sep 21
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Sep 23
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 24
Exeter	Great Hall	Sep 25
Southampton	Guildhall	Sep 27
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 28

KEVIN NIXON

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL

JUDAS PRIEST, MERCYFUL FATE, DEVIN TOWNSEND, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 11-15

BONFIRE, BURNT OUT WRECK

London	Camden Underworld	Jan 22

BROKEN WITT REBELS

Leicester	Academy 2	Apr 1
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Apr 8
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Apr 9
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 10
Aberdeen	Tunnels	Apr 15
Edinburgh	Mash House	Apr 16
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 17
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 22
Brighton	Green Door Store	Apr 23
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 30
Exeter	Cavern Club	May 5
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	May 6

BROTHERS OSBORNE

Cambridge	Junction	Jan 11
Birmingham	Institute	Jan 12
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Jan 14
Leeds	Academy	Jan 15
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Jan 16
Manchester	Albert Hall	Jan 17

BUDE BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL

KEN PUSTELNIK'S GROUNDHOGS, STEPHEN DALE PETIT, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES, MORE

Bude	Penstowe Manor	Nov 6-8

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

London	O2 Arena	April 15, 16
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 16
Glasgow	The Hydro	April 20
Manchester	Arena	Apr 21
Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 23, 24
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Apr 26

CHEAP TRICK

Bristol	Academy	Apr 9
Manchester	Academy	Apr 10
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 14
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 15

CHELSEA BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL

CHRIS FARLOWE, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, MORE

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 13

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY

Dublin	Academy	Apr 24
Belfast	Limelight 2	Apr 25
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Apr 28
Southampton	Engine Rooms	May 21
Birmingham	Institute 2	May 22

COUNTRY TO COUNTRY FESTIVAL

ERIC CHURCH, DARIUS RUCKER, LUKE COMBS, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Mar 12-14
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 12-14
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 12-14

ROBERT CRAY BAND

Newcastle	City Hall	May 1
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	May 2
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 3
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	May 5
Buxton	Opera House	May 6
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 8
London	Cadogan Hall	May 19
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 11
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	May 12
Basingstoke	The Anvil	May 14
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 15
Oxford	New Theatre	May 16

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

ERIC GALES

Still got the blues? Want some more? Then get to one of the gigs by this sparkling talent – with support act Danny Bryant.

See below for dates. Currently February 3 to 14.

CROW BLACK CHICKEN

Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 23
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jan 27
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jan 28
Hartlepool	United FC	Jan 30
Sheffield	HRH Blues Festival	Apr 11

DEEP PURPLE, BLUE ÖYSTER CULT (2021)

Manchester	Arena	Oct 2
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 3
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 5
London	O2 Arena	Oct 7
Birmingham	Arena	Oct 8

DIAMOND HEAD, ROCK GODDESS, TYGERS OF PAN TANG, WEAPON UK

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 24

REBECCA DOWNES, MOJO PREACHERS

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 25

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL

KISS, BIFFY CLYRO, SYSTEM OF A DOWN, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 4-6

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS, JERRY JOSEPH

Leeds	Stylus	May 29
Dublin	Vicar Street	May 30
Glasgow	SWG3 Studio	Jun 1
London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 2
Brighton	Chalk	Jun 3

EPICA, APOCALYPTICA, WHEEL

Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 16
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 17
Bristol	Academy	Apr 18
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Apr 27
Manchester	Academy	Apr 28

ESOTERICA

Bournemouth	The Anvil	Apr 1
Birmingham	Actress & Bishop	Apr 2
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Apr 3
London	Camden Black Heart	Apr 9
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 10

FAITH NO MORE

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 7, 8
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 9
Birmingham	Academy	Jun 11
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 12, 13

BRIAN FALLON AND THE HOWLING WEATHER (2021)

Norwich	Waterfront	Dec 3
Leeds	Academy	Dec 4
Glasgow	SWG3	Dec 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 6
Bristol	Academy	Dec 8
Manchester	Academy	Dec 9
Birmingham	Institute	Dec 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 11

FISH

Manchester	Academy 2	Feb 13
Cardiff	Y Plas	Feb 14
Brighton	Concorde 2	Feb 15
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Feb 17
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 18
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Feb 19
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Feb 21, 22
Northampton	Roadmender	Feb 23
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Feb 25
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Feb 26
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Feb 27

SAMANTHA FISH

Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Mar 15
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Mar 16
Bath	Komedia	Mar 18
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 19
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 20
Manchester	Academy	Mar 21

THE FLAMING LIPS

Galway	Big Top	Jul 17
Liverpool	Invisible Wind Factory	Jul 19
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Jul 21
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Jul 25

FM

Hull	The Welly	Apr 2
Wakefield	Warehouse 23	Apr 3
Nantwich	Civic Hall	Apr 4
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Apr 4
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Apr 10
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Apr 16
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 17
Newcastle	University	Apr 23
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 24
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 1
Reading	Sub 89	May 2

FREEDOM CALL

London	Camden Underworld	Jan 23

ERIC GALES, DANNY BRYANT

Brighton	Concorde 2	Feb 3
Dover	Booking Hall	Feb 4
London	Islington Academy	Feb 5
Southampton	1865	Feb 6
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Feb 7
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 8
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 10
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 11
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Feb 12
Manchester	Academy 3	Feb 13
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 14

GENESIS

Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 1, 2
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Apr 5-7
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Apr 9, 10
Manchester	Arena	Apr 12, 13
Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 15, 16
Belfast	SSE Arena	Apr 18
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 21, 22
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Apr 24, 25
London	O2 Arena	Apr 27, 29, 30

GONG

Colchester	Arts Centre	May 3
Norwich	Arts Centre	May 4
Brighton	Komedia	May 5
Reading	Sub 89	May 6
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	May 7

Bristol	Thekla	May 9
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 10
Southampton	1865	May 11
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	May 12
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 13
York	Crescent	May 14
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	May 15
Manchester	Gorilla	May 16
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	May 17
Carlisle	Brickyard	May 19
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 20
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	May 21
Hitchin	Club 85	May 22
Ramsgate	Music Room	May 27
London	Ladbroke Grove Subterania	May 28

GOTTHARD

London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Apr 21

GREEN DAY

London	London Stadium	Jun 25
Huddersfield	John Smiths Stadium	Jun 26
Glasgow	Green	Jun 28
Dublin	RDS Arena	Jun 30

GUNS N' ROSES

London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jun 18, 19
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 22
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 24

STEVE HACKETT (2021)

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Sep 10
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Sep 11
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Sep 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 14
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 15
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 17
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Sep 18
London	Palladium	Sep 20-22
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 24
Edinburgh	Playhouse	Sep 25
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 27
Dundee	Caird Hall	Sep 28
Scunthorpe	Baths Hall	Sep 30
Bradford	St George's Hall	Oct 1
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 2
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Oct 4
Guildford	G Live	Oct 5
Brighton	Dome	Oct 7
Poole	Lighthouse	Oct 8
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 9
Southampton	Mayflower Theatre	Oct 11
Plymouth	Pavilions	Oct 12
Carlisle	Sands Centre	Oct 14
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 16
Aylesbury	Waterside	Oct 18
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 19
Peterborough	Cresset Theatre	Oct 21
Harrogate	Royal Hall	Oct 22

HARD ROCK HELL NEW WAVE OF CLASSIC ROCK

MASSIVE WAGONS, BAD TOUCH, MASSIVE, MORE

Leicester	Academy	Jan 23, 24

HARD ROCK HELL PSYCH

ØRESUND SPACE COLLECTIVE, GORILLA, ELECTRIC MOON, MORE

Liverpool	Psych Club	Apr 17, 18
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 1
Nottingham	Doghouse	Apr 2
Leeds	Academy HRH Prog	Apr 3
Hull	Adelphi	Apr 4
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 7
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 8
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Apr 9
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 10
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 11
Norwich	Brickmakers	Apr 13
Leicester	The Musician	Apr 15
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 16
Hitchin	Club 85	Apr 17
Brighton	Komedia	Apr 18
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 21
Southampton	1865	Apr 22
Bridgwater	Cobblestones	Apr 23
Swansea	Hangar 18	Apr 24
Worcester	Marrs Bar	Apr 25

HELLOWEEN, DIRKSCHNEIDER

Manchester	Academy	May 22
London	Brixton Academy	May 23

HERETIC FEST

INGLORIOUS, AARON BUCHANAN, RAVENEYE, MORE

Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 30-May 2

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES, KILLING JOKE (2021)

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Aug 5
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Aug 6
Glasgow	Hydro	Aug 7
London	O2 Arena	Aug 9

WILKO JOHNSON

Portsmouth	New Theatre Royal	Feb 4
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Feb 5
Peterborough	Cresset Theatre	Feb 6
Glasgow	Saint Luke's Church	Feb 10
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Feb 11
Manchester	RNCM	Feb 12
Birmingham	Town Hall	Feb 19
Nottingham	Albert Hall	Feb 20
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Feb 21
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Feb 25
Bury St Edmunds	Apex Arts Centre	Feb 26
Bexhill	De Le Warr Pavilion	Feb 27
Poole	Lighthouse	Feb 23
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Apr 24
Shrewsbury	Theatre Severn	Apr 29
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 30

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Aberdeen	Drummonds	May 2
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	May 4
Manchester	Night & Day Café	May 5
Nottingham	Bodega	May 6
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 7
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 11
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	May 12

KINGDOM OF MADNESS FEATURING TONY MARTIN

Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 10
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 11
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	May 12
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 26
Havant	Spring Arts Centre	May 27
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Apr 1
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 2
Maidenhead	Norden Farm Centre	Apr 3
Colchester	Arts Centre	Apr 4
Swindon	Level III	Apr 9
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 10
Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 11
Leicester	Y Theatre	Apr 23
Sudbury	Quay Theatre	Apr 24
Wolverhampton	Newhampton Arts Centre	Apr 30
Bradford	Nightrain	May 1

KING KING, CATS IN SPACE, FIRED UP

Chepstow	Castle	May 1

LARKIN POE

Dublin	Vicar Street	Feb 3
Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Feb 4
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 5
Brighton	Chalk	Feb 6
Bristol	SWX	Feb 8
Oxford	Academy	Feb 9
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 10
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 11

LAZULI

Cambridge	Portland Arms	Mar 1
Newcastle	Think Tank	Mar 2
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Mar 3
Liverpool	Cavern Club	Mar 4
Stourport	Fusion Festival	Mar 6
Southampton	1865	Mar 7
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Jun 23

AYNSLEY LISTER

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 26

LONDON ROCKS

KEN PULSTENIK'S GROUNDHOGS, JOHN VERITY BAND, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 21

LORDI

Sheffield	Corporation	Feb 10
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Feb 11
Birmingham	Hammerfest	Feb 21
London	Islington Academy	Feb 14
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Feb 15

MAN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 30
Derby	Flowerpot	Apr 1
Leamington Spa	Assembly	Oct 1

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Apr 13
Guildford	G Live	Apr 14
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Apr 16
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 18
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 19
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 20
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 22
Plymouth	Pavilions	Apr 24
Brighton	Dome	Apr 26
Bath	Forum	Apr 27
Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 29
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Apr 30
Cardiff	St David's Hall	May 1
Liverpool	Philharmonic	May 3

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

FISH

Sad that the big fella is hanging up his microphone after this tour. Go and say goodbye to one of prog's great frontmen.

See previous page for dates. Currently February 23 to 27.

York	Barbican	May 4
Newcastle	City Hall	May 5
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 7
Manchester	Apollo	May 8
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	May 9

Recommended

MASSIVE WAGONS

Glasgow	Garage	Mar 11
Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 12
London	Islington Academy	Mar 13
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 15
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 16
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Mar 18
Birmingham	Academy 2	Mar 19
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Mar 20
Cardiff	The Globe	Mar 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 24
Exeter	Cavern Club	Mar 25
Newcastle	Riverside	Mar 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 28

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

MAYHEM, MORTIIS

Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 23
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 24
Dublin	Academy	Mar 25
Glasgow	Slay	Mar 26
Bristol	The Fleece	Mar 27
London	Islington Academy	Mar 28

FANTASTIC NEGRITO

London	Camden Jazz Café	Mar 29

NIGHTWISH, AMORPHIS, TURMION KÄTILÖT

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 1
London	Wembley Arena	May 2

THE NIMMO BROTHERS (2021)

Clitheroe	The Grand	Jul 13
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Jul 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Jul 15

ORANGE GOBLIN, SPIRIT ADRIFT, KING CREATURE (2021)

Buckley	Tivoli	Dec 9
Belfast	Limelight 2	Dec 10
Dublin	Grand Social	Dec 11
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Dec 13
Manchester	Gorilla	Dec 14
Birmingham	Asylum	Dec 15
Cardiff	Globe	Dec 16
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 17, 18

PARADISE LOST

Leeds	Warehouse	May 1

PARTY AT THE PARK

KAISER CHIEFS, GUN, ASH, MORE

Perth	Lesser South Inch Park	Jun 26, 27

JIZZY PEARL'S LOVE/HATE

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Feb 17
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Feb 18
Buckley	Tivoli	Feb 19

Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Feb 20
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Feb 21
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Feb 24
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	Feb 25
Newcastle	The Cluny	Feb 26
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 27
London	Camden Underworld	Feb 28

STEPHEN DALE PETIT

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 5

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF WITH GAVIN HARRISON (2021)

Dublin	Button Factory	Oct 5
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Oct 6
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 7
Bristol	SWX	Oct 8
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 30

PRAYING MANTIS, VAMBO (2021)

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 7
Gravesend	Red Lion	Oct 8
London	[Venue TBC]	Oct 9
Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 10
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Oct 13
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 14
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 15
Cannock	The Station	Oct 16
Bradford	Nightrain	Oct 17

THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS, PAULINE MURRAY

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 28
Bristol	Academy	Apr 29
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 1
Liverpool	Academy	May 2
Manchester	Academy 2	May 3
Cambridge	Junction	May 5

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

London	O2 Arena	Jun 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 16, 17, 19, 20
Manchester	Arena	Jun 10, 11
Birmingham	Arena	Jun 13, 14

QUIREBOYS (2021)

Oxford	The Bullingdon	Dec 10
Bristol	Thekla	Dec 11
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Dec 12
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 13
Brighton	Concorde 2	Jan 28
Birmingham	Institute	Jan 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Jan 30
Blyth	Phoenix Theatre	May 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 4
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 5
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Feb 6
Gloucester	Guildhall	Feb 11
Manchester	Club Academy	Feb 12
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 13
Buckley	Tivoli	
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 3, 4
Dover	Booking Hall	Sep 5
Cambridge	Junction	Sep 16
Shrewsbury	Theatre Severn	Sep 22
Guildford	Boileroom	Oct 1

RADAR FESTIVAL

DIRTY LOOPS, HAKEN, INTERVALS, MORE

Guildford	Guildford Park	Jul 30, 31

WILL IRELAND

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR (2021)
CLUTCH, BIG BIG TRAIN, FOGHAT, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 16-18

RAMMSTEIN

Belfast	Boucher Road Playing Fields	Jun 12
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 16
Coventry	Ricoh Arena	Jun 19

READING & LEEDS FESTIVAL
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, LIAM GALLAGHER, MORE

Reading	Richfield Avenue	Aug 27-29
Leeds	Braham Park	Aug 27-29

RECKLESS LOVE, DAN REED NETWORK, MASON HILL

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 1
Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 2
Birmingham	The Mill	Mar 4
Liverpool	Grand Central Hall	Mar 5
Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 6
Glasgow	Garage	Mar 8
Leeds	Warehouse	Mar 9
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 10
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Mar 11

REDD KROSS

Brighton	The Albert	May 3
Bristol	The Exchange	May 4
Manchester	Deaf Institute	May 5
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 6
Glasgow	Broadcast	May 7
London	Islington The Lexington	May 9, 10

RHINO'S REVENGE

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jun 4
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jun 5
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	Jun 6
Winchester	The Railway	Jun 11
Horsham	REC Rooms	Jun 12

ROCK AND BLUES CUSTOM SHOW
MONSTER TRUCK, THOSE DAMN CROWS, MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, MORE

Pentrich	Coney Grey Showground	Jul 29-31

ROCK AT THE BAY
SON OF MAN, BUCK & EVANS, BUFFALO SUMMER, MORE

Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Jun 5

ROSE TATTOO

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jul 19
Birmingham	Institute 2	Jul 20
Glasgow	SWG3	Jul 21

JOE SATRIANI

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 30
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	May 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 2
London	Palladium	May 4
Gateshead	The Sage	May 5
Glasgow	Academy	May 6

SAXON

London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 1
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 2
Manchester	Apollo	May 3

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Oxford	Academy 2	Apr 6
Swansea	Sin City	Apr 7
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Apr 9
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 10
Nottingham	Glee Club	Apr 11
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Apr 13
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Apr 14
Leeds	Warehouse	Apr 15
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 16

SLAM DUNK FESTIVAL
SUM 41, NOFX, PENNYWISE, MORE

Leeds	Temple Newsam Park	May 29
Hatfield	Hatfield Park	May 30

SNAKE OIL AND HARMONY, NATE BERGMAN (2021)

Aberdare	Jacs	Nov 26
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 27
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Nov 28
Manchester	Night People	Sat 29
London	Putney Half Moon	Nov 30
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Dec 2
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 3
Nottingham	Billy Bootleggers	Dec 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 5
Chester	Live Rooms	Dec 7
Glasgow	Cottiers Theatre	Dec 8
Newcastle	The Cluny	Dec 9
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Dec 10
Ballymena	Diamond Rock Bar	Dec 11

SOCIAL DISTORTION

Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 14
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 16

SOUTHPORT BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, HENRIK FREISCHLADER, KYLA BROX, MORE

Southport	The Atkinson	Feb 21

SPARKS

Manchester	Albert Hall	May 20
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 21
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 23
Dublin	Vicar Street	May 25
Belfast	Limelight Club	May 26
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	May 28

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL
TOM KEIFER, H.E.A.T, PHIL CAMPBELL, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 23-25

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS, THE PROFESSIONALS, TV SMITH

Bristol	Academy	Mar 4
Cardiff	Great Hall	Mar 5
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 6
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Mar 8
Northampton	Roadmender	Mar 9
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 10
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 12
Leeds	Academy	Mar 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 14
Troon	Concert Hall	Mar 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 17
Manchester	Academy	Mar 19
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 20

STONE BROKEN, PHIL X & THE DRILLS, THE FALLEN STATE

Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 18
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 19
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 20
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 21
Cardiff	University	Apr 23
Bristol	SWX	Apr 24
Exeter	Lemon Grove	Apr 25
Brighton	Chalk	Apr 26
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 28
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Apr 29
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 30

STRANGLERS, RUTS DC

Lincoln	Engine Shed	Mar 29
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Mar 30
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 1, 2
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Apr 3
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 5
Bristol	Academy	Apr 6
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 8
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 9
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 10
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Apr 12
Guildford	G Live	Apr 13
Brighton	Dome	Apr 14
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 16, 17
Norwich	UEA	Apr 19
Reading	Hexagon	Apr 20
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 22
Warrington	Parr Hall	Apr 23
Cardiff	Great Hall	Apr 24
Leeds	Academy	Apr 26
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 27
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Apr 28
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 30

SWEET (2021)

Brighton	Chalk	Nov 25
Salisbury	City Hall	Nov 26
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 27
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 28
Birmingham	Town Hall	Dec 2
Shrewsbury	Buttermarket	Dec 3
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Dec 4
Norwich	Waterfront	Dec 5
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Dec 8
Glasgow	Garage	Dec 9
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Dec 10
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 11
Cardiff	University	Dec 17
Manchester	Academy	Dec 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 19
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Dec 20

GEOFF TATE

Belfast	Limelight	Apr 23
Dublin	Lost Lane	Apr 24
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 27
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 28
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 29
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Apr 30
Inverness	Mad Hatters	May 3
Edinburgh	Bannermans Bar	May 5
Glasgow	Cathouse	May 7
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 9
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	May 13
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	May 14
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 15

RAMMSTEIN

It's much more than just the music with these industrial noise merchants. If you're sitting up close, wear flameproof clothes.

See left for dates. Currently June 12 to 16.

JENS KOCH GELSENK/PRESS

THERAPY?

Brighton	Concorde 2	May 5
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	May 6
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	May 7
Manchester	The Ritz	May 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 10
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 11
Bristol	SWX	May 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 14
Nottingham	Rock City	May 15
Cambridge	Junction	May 17
Newcastle	Riverside	May 26
Glasgow	Garage	May 27
Hull	The Welly	May 28
Norwich	Waterfront	May 29

GEORGE THOROGOOD

Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jul 23
London	Shepherds Bush Empire	Jul 25
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Jul 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jul 28
York	Barbican	Jul 30
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Jul 31
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Aug 1

THUNDER, UGLY KID JOE

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	May 13
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 14
London	Wembley Arena	May 15
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 22
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 23

TYKETTO, GIN ANNIE

London	Highbury Garage	Mar 19
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 20
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Mar 21
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 24
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 25
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 26
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Mar 27

Recommended

URIAH HEEP (2021)

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 29
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 30
London	Palladium	Oct 3
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 4
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 5

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Apr 26
London	Palladium	May 3
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 4
Bath	Forum	May 5
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	May 6

STAN WEBB'S CHICKEN SHACK

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 13

BILLY WALTON BAND

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 16

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 31
Birmingham	Arena	Apr 1
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Apr 3
Brighton	Centre	Apr 5
Bournemouth	International Centre	Apr 6, 7
Manchester	Arena	Apr 9
Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 10
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 11
Hull	Bonus Arena	Apr 13
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Apr 14
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Apr 15
London	O2 Arena	Apr 17

WHITBY BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, HENRIK FREISCHLADER, KYLA BROX, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Feb 20

THE WHITE BUFFALO, LA EDWARDS

Bristol	Academy	Apr 19
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 22
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 23
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 24
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 26
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 27

THE WHO

Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 3
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Mar 8
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 10
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Mar 12
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 15
Birmingham	RWA	Mar 17
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 22
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 24
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 27
Manchester	Arena	Mar 29

WILLE & THE BANDITS

Bideford	Palladium	Mar 4
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Mar 5
Truro	Old Bakery	Mar 6
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Mar 11
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Mar 13
Nottingham	Bodega	Mar 18
Bewcastle	The Cluny	Mar 20
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 26
Bristol	Thekla	Mar 27
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 16

Y&T (2021)

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 26
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 29
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 30
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 31
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 30
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 4
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 5
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 6
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 7

YES

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 16
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 17
York	Barbican	May 19
Gateshead	The Sage	May 20
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 22
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	May 23
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 24

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Idles

Abbey Road Lock-In Sessions

Nervous start, explosive finish. The Bristolian firebands live at iconic studios.

★ "Sorry about the lack of chit-chat but I'm inconsolably nervous," Idles singer Joe Talbot admits midway through the first of the band's three live-streamed coronavirus lockdown shows from London's fabled studios. Shot from above and in kinetic close-up, these Bristolian headbangers slog through *Mr Motivator*, *Queens* and other monster anthems old and new, sounding at times like Sleaford Mods jamming with Sonic Youth. The studio crackles with pent-up energy, but playing to a remote invisible audience has clearly pushed Idles outside their crowd-pleasing, shout-along comfort zone. Not until the third performance does Talbot fully regain his usual combustible blend of sardonic humour, turbo-Tourette's bellowing, snarky political slogans and garishly loud shirts. "I've missed this so fucking much," he says, grinning.

First among an eclectic handful of covers is a lumbering slo-mo trudge through *I Wanna Be Sedated*, part irreverent tribute and part punk piss-take. "For anyone interested, there's a much better version of that song by the Ramones," Talbot says apologetically. The middle set throws up a more dynamic left-field choice: *Reptilia* by the Strokes, a formative influence on Idles. But the last show climaxes with a gloriously pyrotechnic assault on The Beatles' proto-metal anthem *Helter Skelter*, a nod to the Abbey Road location, mashed up with Placebo's *Pure Morning*. It's a very Idles finale, both iconic and iconoclastic. From stuttering start to explosive finish, they get there in the end.

Stephen Dalton

The Black Moods

Summer Isolation Show

Arizona radio-rock trio keep it trad for online fundraiser.

★ Streamed on Facebook, this live set is presented with a link and encouragement to donate to Music For Rocky Point, a fundraiser set up to help the citizens of a struggling Mexican town and its venues, both of which were walloped by Covid-19 wiping out the area's tourism industry overnight. Clearly, it's a very nice thing to do. Which makes it harder to admit to the slog that lies ahead.

Arizona band The Black Moods are reassuringly solid. What they lack in thrills, in danger, in originality, they make up for with dependable post-grunge trad rock, oddly sexless yet clearly Zeppelin-influenced, with curly-topped frontman Josh Kennedy emoting with the kind of unflinching, baby-Vedder earnestness that has been the bread and butter of US radio for the past two decades.

Unfortunately, though, someone made the decision to frame the screen with the floating graphics on their backdrop, giving it the cheap nylon look and feel of 1980s *Top Of The Pops* at its most garish without any of the sense of fun. Which is a shame, because without that distraction they'd have pulled off a fair stab at recreating the atmosphere of the kind of club show that will neither live long in the memory nor change anyone's life, but goes down nicely enough with a couple of midweek beers.

Emma Johnston

GETTY

'A matey bonhomie emanates from the stage.'

Glen Matlock: looking a little different from his Sex Pistols days.

Glen Matlock

London Camden Electric Ballroom

A cautious yet welcome return to live music with an original Sex Pistol.

★ A double sense of history hangs over the Electric Ballroom tonight. The last time Glen Matlock played here was in 1978 as part of The Vicious White Kids – that'll be The Damned's Rat Scabies, the Rich Kids' Steve New, Sid Vicious and a mercifully unplugged Nancy Spungen – in an effort to raise the transatlantic airfare for punk's star-crossed lovers.

Just over 42 years to the day, the original Sex Pistols bassist is back here with Sigue Sigue Sputnik guitarist Neal X, bassist Jim Lowe and Johnny Thunders' erstwhile drummer Chris Musto to play one of the pandemic's first socially distanced gigs that sees the venue's 1,500-capacity reduced to only 140 seated punters.

Holloway hellcats The Priscillas are out of the traps early with a spiky set of tuneful pop-punk that, like closing number Superhero, truly takes off once their initial guitar hassles are resolved.

No such technical problems for Matlock and his band, who launch into an entirely appropriate Won't Put The Brakes On Me. A matey bonhomie emanates from the stage, which goes some way to softening the impact of Matlock's Dylanesque approach to covers that include Scott Walker's Montague Terrace (In Blue) before going full circle with a spirited Pretty Vacant.

It's beery pub rock throughout, and as a taster for amplified music it whets the appetite just fine.

Julian Marszalek

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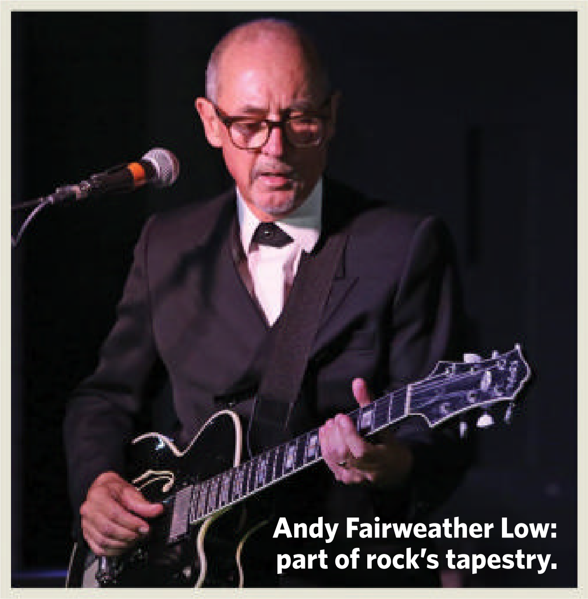


Andy Fairweather Low: part of rock's tapestry.

Andy Fairweather Low

London Brixton Hideaway Club

Half as nice as paradise.

★ 'If you can't fill up the dancefloor, see how many people you can get on stage', seems to be Andy Fairweather Low's motto for this live-streamed gig. So there's a horn section at the Hideaway Club, one of those low-ceilinged places that he's become familiar with over the past 50 years – when he hasn't been traipsing around stadiums with Eric Clapton or Roger Waters, that is.

His hits with Amen Corner – (*Bend Me Shape Me*, *(If Paradise Is) Half As Nice*) and on his own (*La Booga Rooga*, *Wide Eyed And Legless*) are part of the texture of rock's tapestry rather than the sequins, and as such are a particular pleasure to rediscover. It's the same with his covers; Slim Harpo's *Got Love If You Want It* was part of every 60s beat group's repertoire but was never a hit, and *TV Mama* is not the first Freddie King song you'd think of.

Andy finishes the one-hour, 18-song set with a note-for-note rendition of Keith Richards's guitar solo on *Route 66* from the first Rolling Stones album, sending a small tremor of delight to the audience watching around the planet.

Hugh Fielder

Trivium

The Deepest Cuts live stream

Floridian metallers revive old gems.

★ They're huddled together in their rehearsal room in Orlando, Florida – a space so small you could mistake it for a matchbox. As frontman Matt Heafy says: "There are no backing tracks. No click tracks. You are just listening to the four of us."

You have to give the band enormous credit for this performance. Not only do they have no stage show, but they've leapt in to do a two hour set consisting of songs they're either never played live before, or have rarely done. But the energy and dynamic between the four is mesmerising.

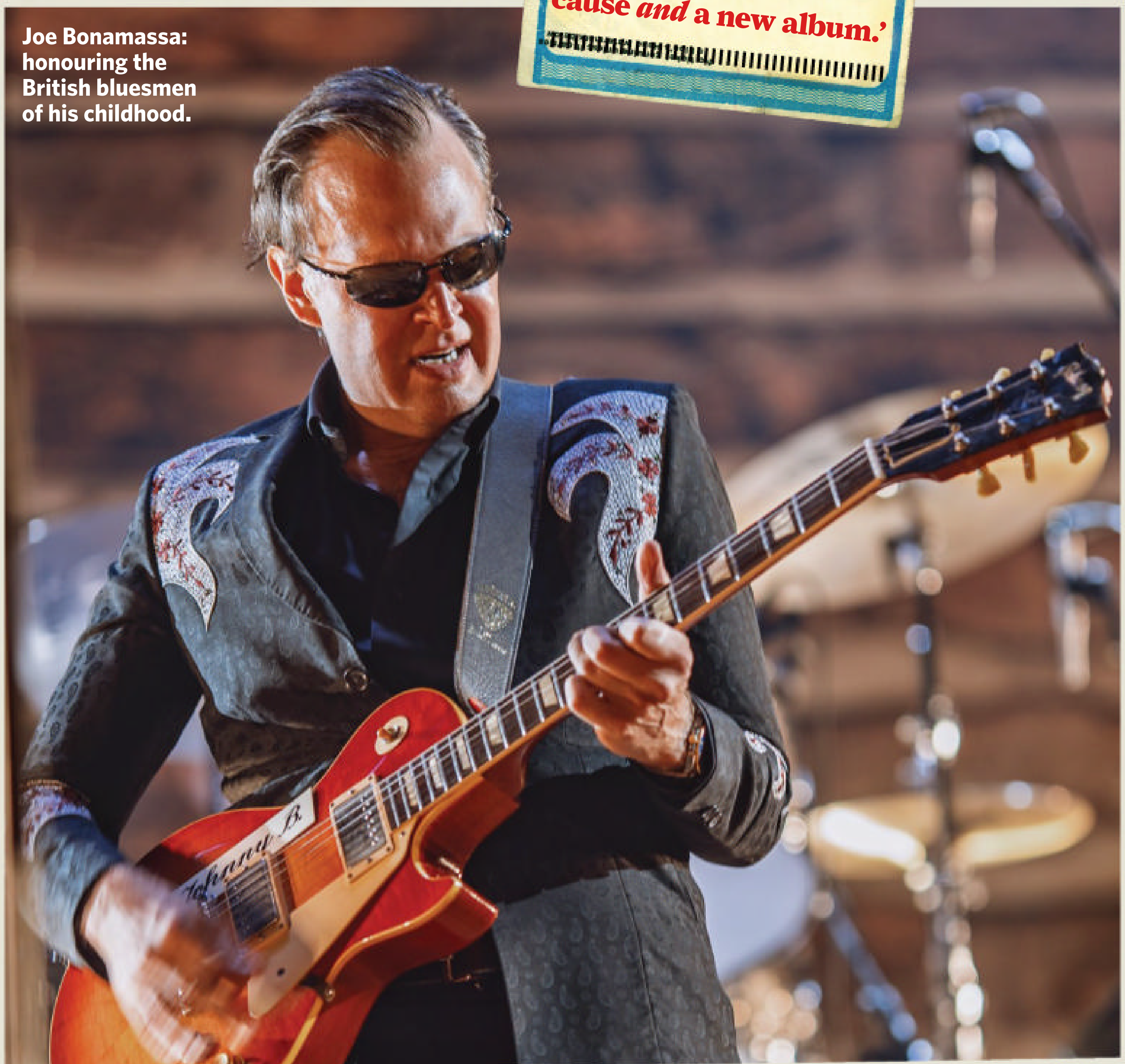
There are moments when the musos exchange banter as if they're in a private situation. But Heafy never allows the internal laughter to become a distraction from the fact that there's a worldwide audience tuned in. Still, things get amusing when they start *No Way To Heal* and immediately have to stop… because Heafy is playing the wrong song.

The most emotional moment comes with a cover of Power's Trip's *Executioner's Tax (Swing Of The Axe)*, dedicated to that band's vocalist Riley Gales who tragically died recently.

The performance ends with the band packing away the gear. Hardly the rock star climax we're used to, but in these unusual times it is effective.

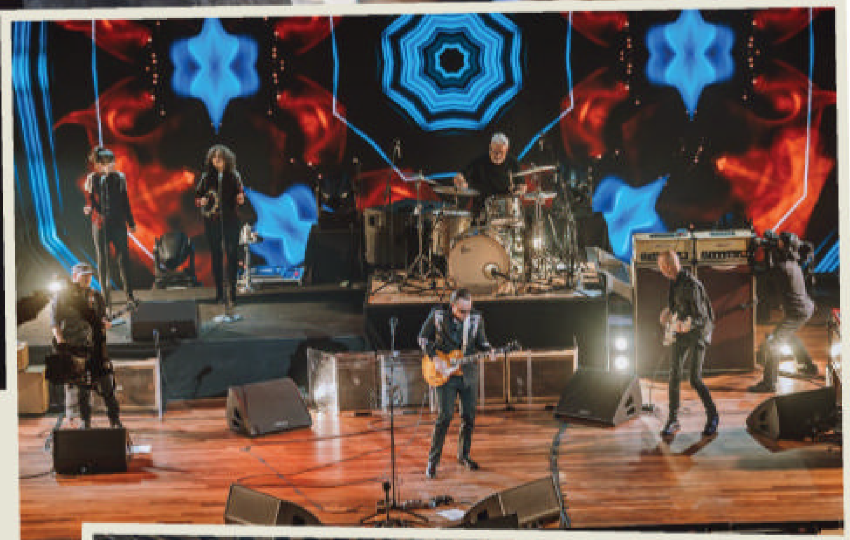
Malcolm Dome

ANDY FAIRWEATHER: © JUDY TOTTON; JOE BONAMASSA: KIT WOOD



Joe Bonamassa: honouring the British bluesmen of his childhood.

'This one-off gives publicity to a good cause *and* a new album.'



Joe Bonamassa

Nashville The Ryman Auditorium

A first taste of new *Royal Tea* album.

★ With a dollar from each stream ticket sale going to Bonamassa's Keeping The Blues Alive Foundation, this one-off show gives publicity to a good cause *and* a new studio album.

A 9pm UK start-time is fitting too, because *Royal Tea*'s punning title illustrates Bonamassa's assertion that he's honouring the British bluesmen of his childhood. He plays 90 per cent of it, slightly re-sequenced, to an audience of cardboard cutouts.

On *Lookout Man* the band – Reese Wynans on organ, drummer Greg Morrow, bassist Michael Rhodes and guitarist Rob McNelley – are joined by Wet Willie's Jimmy Hall on harmonica. But the show really takes off with *Why Does It Take So Long To Say Goodbye*. One of a clutch co-written with Bernie Marsden, it's a Whitesnake-style showstopper made even better thanks to the backing vocals of Jade MacRae and Dannielle DeAndrea. *A Conversation With Alice* (another Marsden co-write) works almost as well, but after that the level dips and the boogie-woogie *Lonely Boy* is a climax no one was expecting. Happily, after a four-minute intermission amends are made. The band return with Rory Gallagher's *Cradle Rock* and Free's *Walk In My Shadow* – reminding us that there's a remix of Bonamassa's debut album in the shops too – and close with Jethro Tull's *A New Day Yesterday* segued into a stunning replay of Steve Howe's finale to Yes's *Starship Trooper*. Hot *and* strong.

Neil Jeffries

Tough crowd: meet Bonamassa's cardboard cutout punters.

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Metallica drummer ***Lars Ulrich*** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Paul Elliott**

“For me, Ritchie Blackmore is the epitome of the guitar hero.”

“Everybody has heard me talk to death about the Motörheads and the Diamond Heads and the Iron Maidens of this world,” says the voluble drummer with Metallica, “but I do have a fairly large appreciation for many music genres.”

Born on December 26, 1963 in Gentofte, Denmark, and resident in California since the age of 13, Lars Ulrich co-founded Metallica in 1981, with the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal as the template. While his music tastes extend to jazz, Oasis, Rage Against The Machine and Simon & Garfunkel, his first love, Deep Purple, remains close to his heart.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

When I was growing up, my dad would play a lot of jazz music – Coltrane, Miles, Dexter Gordon, Ornette Coleman – and some rock: Hendrix, the Stones, The Doors. The music you would hear on Danish radio was basically what was coming out of England at the time, so in the early seventies a lot of glam stuff.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

It was a song called *Hit The Lights*, with a band called Metallica, in 1982 at Radio City in Anaheim, California. This is the only band I’ve ever been in, and the first song that James Hetfield and I ever wrote together was *Hit The Lights*.

THE BEST RECORD I’VE MADE

Hardwired… To Self-Destruct is the one I have the fewest issues with, and the one that still sounds the most representative of my current head space.

THE WORST RECORD I’VE MADE

Lars Ulrich shocker – we haven’t made a bad record! But seriously, without pussying out, I don’t look at any of them as mistakes. *Kill ’Em All* [1983] sounds like a very long time ago, a lot of youthful energy on that one. But I’m very at ease with the past.

THE BEST LIVE BAND I’VE SEEN

Motörhead, AC/DC, Rage Against The Machine, Deep Purple, Thin Lizzy. I don’t know if one is better than the other, but I was fortunate enough to see all of them very early.

THE SINGER

Bon Scott was the coolest singer ever – the vocal delivery, the tongue-in-cheek double entendres and the magnetic personality. Those early AC/DC records – *Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap, Let There Be Rock, Powerage, Highway To Hell* – are just fucking timeless.

THE GUITAR HERO

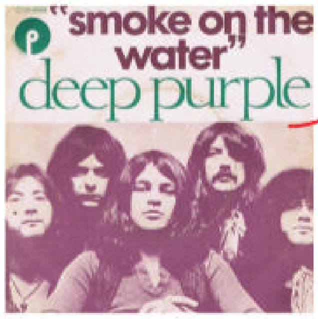
Ritchie Blackmore. The first concert I ever went to was Deep Purple. I was nine years old, and I still can close my eyes and see him taking the black-and-white Stratocaster and playing it with his foot or grinding it against the PA speakers. That left an impression on me. I think he was the best guitar player of that generation, and for me the epitome of the guitar hero.

THE SONGWRITER

Noel Gallagher. The hardest thing in the world – trust me, we know this first-hand – is to write a simple song. And the shorter and simpler, the harder it is. Those great Oasis songs – *Wonderwall, Live Forever, Supersonic* – if you hear Noel do them by himself, just guitar and voice, it’s pretty incredible what those songs break down to when you’re that naked and that vulnerable.

oasis
Definitely Maybe

rage against the machine



SIMON AND GARFUNKEL'S GREATEST HITS

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

I’ll give you five in random order: *Made In Japan* [Deep Purple], *Lightning To The Nations* [Diamond Head], *No Sleep ’Til Hammersmith* [Motörhead], *Definitely Maybe* [Oasis] and the first Rage Against The Machine album [self-titled]. Those are the timeless ones for me. I gravitate between them depending on what mood I’m in. I would say in the last year or so Rage Against The Machine speak more to me than any other band.

THE ANTHEM

Smoke On The Water. I don’t know if I can say anything about that song that hasn’t been said already. But I can tell you it was a pretty cool experience for me around fifteen years ago when Ian Gillan did a show in San Francisco and I ended up playing *Smoke On The Water* with him. That was pretty fucking surreal for a guy who grew up in a room plastered with posters of Deep Purple.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

In the right mood, some of those timeless Simon & Garfunkel songs can definitely hit an emotional nerve: *The Sound Of Silence, Scarborough Fair*. Speaking of Paul Simon, his wife Edie Brickell, the first record she made, *Shooting Rubberbands At The Stars*, has one song, *Air Of December*, which definitely can get me a little on the misty-eyed side.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY SONG

Stereo MCs, *Connected*. That album is fucking genius. Every song just makes you want to bounce around and get your groove on.

MY ‘IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE’ SONG

I’ll give you this, but let’s leave it at what I give you. Let’s say that my wife and I have a special relationship with the first Montrose album [self-titled], okay? Make of that what you want. Fill in the blanks.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

Killing In The Name, Rage Against The Machine. *‘Fuck you, I won’t do what you tell me!’* But I don’t know if that’s a song I feel defines my life. I could go with Oasis, *Supersonic*, or Diamond Head, *Am I Evil?*. Or I guess *Return Of The Vampire* by Mercyful Fate. That’s an old classic that I played on when they re-recorded it around 1993, and maybe in some weird way *Return Of The Vampire* could be me in my afterlife coming back. ●

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